NATION

Manipur NIA court to decide on ethnic violence

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BUSINESS

Markets rebound 1%, IT shares gain

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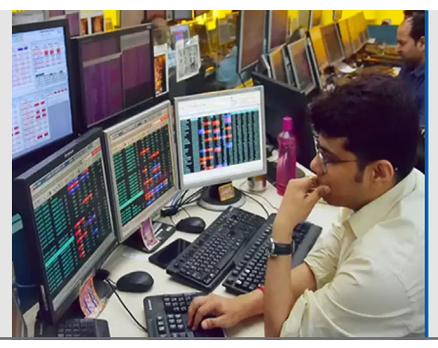

SPORTS

PBKS eyeing first top-two finish in 11 years vs DC

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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PHOTO: X

Bangladesh's interim chief Yunus mulls resignation

DHAKA, 23 MAY

Bangladesh's interim government chief Muhammad Yunus is mulling resignation as he is finding it difficult to work in view of political parties failing to reach a common ground, according to a media report. Student-led National Citizen Party chief Nhid Islam was quoted by BBC Bangla Service that Yunus is apprehensive of the evolving political situation and whether he will be able to carry on with his work. "Sir said, 'If I can't work... I was brought here after a mass uprising to bring change and reform to the country. But in the current situation, with mounting pressure from movements and the way I'm being cornered, this isn't how I can work. The political parties—you've all failed to reach common ground'," Islam told the BBC. *—PTI*

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PHOTO: X

HC stays cases against BJP IT cell chief, Arnab

BENGALURU, 23 MAY

The Karnataka High Court has granted an interim stay on criminal proceedings initiated against BJP leader Amit Malviya and Republic TV's Editor-in-Chief Arnab Goswami, in connection with allegations of spreading false claims that the Indian National Congress (INC) operates an office in Istanbul, Turkey. The stay will remain in effect until the next hearing. The Congress had filed multiple complaints across the country, including in State, accusing Malviya and Goswami of orchestrating a "criminally motivated campaign" to spread fabricated claims that the Istanbul Congress Centre in Turkey is an official Congress office. *—PTI*

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SC grills R'than govt over student suicides in Kota

The Supreme Court on Friday grilled the Rajasthan government over 14 students committing suicide in Kota calling the situation "serious". The top court heard a matter concerning the deaths of a 22-year-old student of IIT, Kharagpur and a NEET aspirant, who was found hanging in her room in Kota. The top court questioned the four-day delay in registering the FIR in connection with the IIT Kharagpur student's death. The bench also disapproved non filing of the FIR in the NEET aspirant's case and summoned the police officer concerned for an explanation. It refused to believe Rajasthan's counsel, who claimed that IIT Kharagpur authorities had alerted the police after learning about the suicide. The SC had ordered forming a national task force to address the mental health concerns of students. The task force constituted by the apex court would take its time before giving a composite report to the court. *—PTI*

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India to let foreign firms bid for govt contracts?

Contracts over $50B could be available to US companies

NEW DELHI/ WASHINGTON

India is preparing to open a significant portion of its government procurement market to foreign companies, including US firms, as a strategic policy shift tied to ongoing trade negotiations, officials said. According to a Reuters report, India is likely to allow US companies to bid for contracts valued at over $50 billion, primarily involving federal entities.

The move is seen as part of a broader effort to strike a limited trade agreement with Washington by early July.

It follows a similar concession made to the United Kingdom earlier this month under the India-UK Free Trade Agreement. British firms were granted access to select central government tenders on a reciprocal basis.

- The move is seen as an attempt to strike a limited trade agreement with Washington by early July, which is when Trump's 90 day pause on tariffs ends

This is a significant shift in India's traditionally protectionist stance on public procurement.

India has long resisted joining the WTO's Government Procurement Agreement, citing the need to shield domestic small businesses. Sources however, stress that the new approach won't compromise that principle.

India's total public procurement market, which includes purchases by central, state and local governments, and PSUs, is estimated at $700 billion to $750 billion annually. Currently, most contracts are reserved for domestic firms, with 25 per cent earmarked for small businesses, the report stated. However, sectors such as defence and railways already permit foreign procurement when local alternatives are unavailable.

The development comes as Trade Minister Piyush Goyal concluded a visit to Washington aimed at accelerating bilateral talks. Both sides are hoping to finalise an interim deal before the 90-day tariff pause announced by US President Donald Trump expires in July.

—Salar News with Agencies

India, Pak extend airspace bans

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

India has extended its airspace ban on Pakistan airlines until 23 June 2025, following a series of punitive measures enacted after the Pahalgam terror attack that. The ban, first instituted on 30 April, restricts all aircraft registered in Pakistan, as well as those operated or leased by Pakistani airlines, from using Indian airspace. This comes as part of broader retaliatory actions from India, including the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty and a downgrade in diplomatic ties.

In related news, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) reported that the crew of an IndiGo flight from New Delhi to Srinagar requested to enter Pakistani airspace on 21 May to avoid severe turbulence caused by a hailstorm. However, their request was denied, which adhered to the restrictions highlighted in the current airspace ban. The aircraft encountered significant turbulence and hail, leading to a damaged nose radome, but no injuries were reported among the passengers. The IndiGo flight was subsequently guided safely to land in Srinagar as the crew managed the situation manually during the turbulent conditions.

Both nations have implemented reciprocal bans on each other's airspace amid escalating tensions, further complicating regional aviation. The DGCA continues to investigate the incident involving the IndiGo flight as safety protocols remain a priority. *—PTI*

OUT ON BAIL, HAVERI GANGRAPE ACCUSED CELEBRATE

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

Seven accused in a gangrape case received a celebratory welcome in the form of roadshow after receiving bail in Haveri district.

Over 20 supporters mounted on a convoy of five vehicles conducted the roadshow from the Haveri sub-jail to Akki Alur town. A viral video showed the accused proudly moving through the streets of the town. The Haveri sessions court released the accused on bail as the victim could not identify them in court. The gang-rape happened in January, 2024, with the accused attacking the victim and her partner in a hotel for being in an interfaith relationship. There were also video evidences showing the accused abducting and assaulting her.

Some of the accused were habitual offenders involved in cases of moral policing and violence against women in Hangal. *—Agencies*

SC says states can impose tax on DTH and cable services

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

The Supreme Court on Thursday upheld the constitutional validity of entertainment tax levied by state governments on cable and Direct-to-Home (DTH) television services.

A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and N Kotiswar Singh said broadcast was a service and liable to service tax imposed by Parliament and the activity of entertainment under Entry 62-List II in the Constitution.

The entry deals with taxes on luxuries, including taxes on entertainments, amusements, betting and gambling.

The top court said no entertainment could be presented to the viewers unless the broadcaster transmitted the signals for instantaneous presentation of any performance, film or any programme on their television.

The DTH operators engaged in the activity of providing entertainment were liable to pay service tax on the activity of broadcasting under the provisions of the Finance Act, 1994, being further liable to pay entertainment tax, it held.

- The Supreme Court verdict comes on a batch of appeals against high court orders which held that levy of entertainment tax was unconstitutional

The verdict came on a batch of appeals against high court orders which held that levy of entertainment tax was unconstitutional.

Another batch of appeals filed by DTH operators challenged the provisions of the respective state Acts levying entertainment tax on them.

The operators argued that they were not liable to pay entertainment tax (or luxury tax) under the respective provisions of the state enactments as they were broadcasting signals, through television channels. *—PTI with agencies*

9-month-old tests +ve for Covid-19 in City

BENGALURU, 23 MAY

A nine-month-old baby boy tested positive for Covid-19 in City, health department officials said on Friday.

Harsh Gupta, Principal Secretary, Health and Family Welfare Department, said the baby tested positive via a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) on 22 May. "The patient is stable and currently admitted to Vani Vilas Hospital in Kalasipalya, Bengaluru," he said.

According to health department sources, the baby is from Hoskote in Bengaluru Rural district and was initially admitted to a private hospital.

On 21 May, State Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao confirmed that the state had reported 16 active Covid-19 cases.

On 19 May, the total number of Covid-19 cases in India stood at 257.

Meanwhile, Kerala Health Minister Veena George, urged all the southern state to increase Covid-19 surveillance. In May, Kerala reported 273 Covid-19 cases, the minister said.

- The baby, from Hoskote, is now stable. It was admitted to a private hospital on 22 May. There were 16 officially active Covid cases in the State the day before that

The highest number was in Kottayam with 82 cases, followed by Thiruvananthapuram with 73, Ernakulam with 49, Pathanamthitta with 30, and Thrissur with 26. *—PTI*

NOT IN INDIA!

Make in US, not India: Trump threatens Apple with 25% tariffs

WASHINGTON, 23 MAY

US President Donald Trump on Friday threatened a 50 per cent tax on all imports from the European Union as well a 25 per cent tariff on Apple products unless iPhones are made in America.

"Our discussions with them are going nowhere!" Trump posted on Truth Social. "Therefore, I am recommending a straight 50 per cent tariff on the European Union, starting on 1 June, 2025. There is no tariff if the product is built or manufactured in the United States."

"I have long ago informed Tim Cook of Apple that I expect their iPhone's that will be sold in the United States of America will be manufactured and built in the United States, not India, or anyplace else," Trump wrote. "If that is not the case, a Tariff of at least 25 per cent must be paid by Apple to the US."

That post was preceded by a threat of import taxes against Apple for its plans to continue making its iPhone in Asia. Apple now joins Amazon, Walmart and other major U.S. companies in the White House's crosshairs as they try to respond to the uncertainty and inflationary pressures unleashed by his tariffs.

The President said he wants to charge higher import taxes on goods from the EU, a long-standing US ally, than from China, a geopolitical rival that had its tariffs cut to 30 per cent this month so Washington and Beijing could hold negotiations. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

HARVARD SUES TRUMP GOVT FOR BAN ON FOREIGN STUDENTS

Harvard has sued the Trump administration over its "unlawful" decision to revoke the university's certification to enrol foreign students, asserting that "without its international students, Harvard is not Harvard". Harvard University filed an over 70-page lawsuit in the US District Court for the District of Massachusetts Friday against the Trump administration, including Department of Homeland Security, Department of Justice and State Department as well as against the leaders, including Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

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AMBANI, ADANI AND VEDANTA EYE NE INVESTMENTS

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

Oil-to-telecom conglomerate Reliance Industries Ltd will invest Rs 75,000 crore in North Eastern states in setting up 350 biogas plants, expanding its telecom services, retail footprint, and clean energy projects, chairman Mukesh Ambani said on Friday.

Speaking at the Rising NorthEast Investors Summit here, Reliance Industries Ltd chairman and managing director said his group will invest in factories for high-quality FMCG products in the region and setting up a 150-bed cancer hospital in Manipur.

"Reliance has invested around Rs 30,000 crore in the region in the past 40 years. In the next five years, we will more than double our investments, with our target at Rs 75,000 crore," he said.

This will create over 2.5 million direct and indirect employment opportunities as the conglomerate aspires to touch the lives of most of the 45 million population in the North-East. *—PTI*

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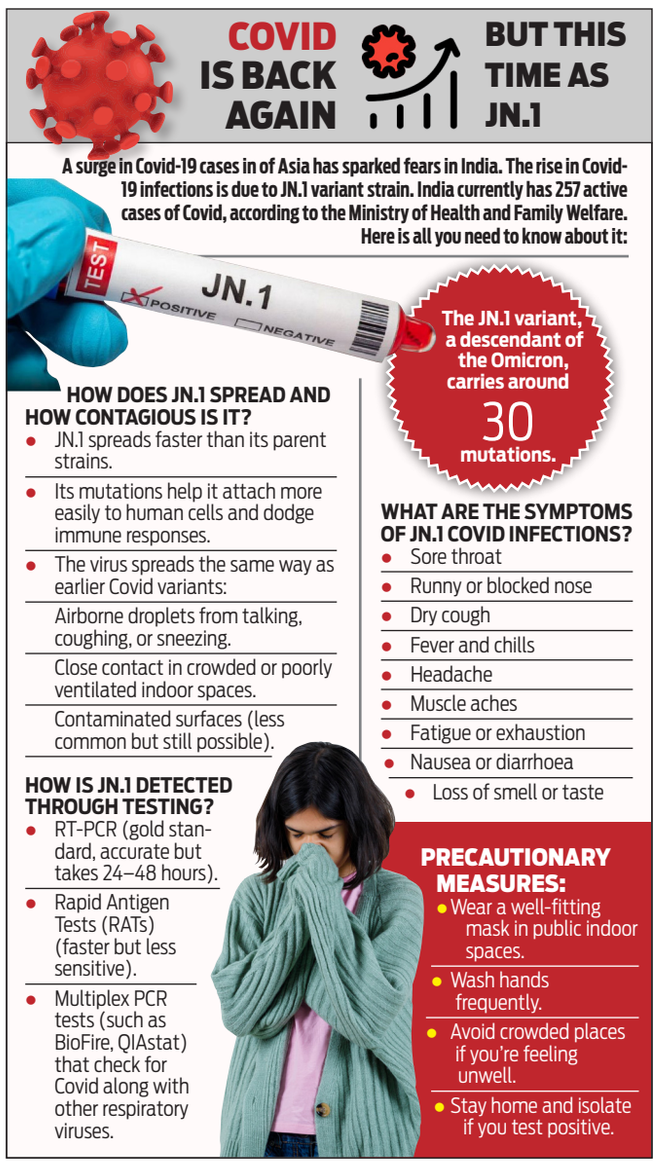

COVID IS BACK AGAIN
BUT THIS TIME AS JN.1
A surge in Covid-19 cases in of Asia has sparked fears in India. The rise in Covid-19 infections is due to JN.1 variant strain. India currently has 257 active cases of Covid, according to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Here is all you need to know about it:
TEST
JN.1
POSITIVE
NEGATIVE
The JN.1 variant, a descendant of the Omicron, carries around 30 mutations.
HOW DOES JN.1 SPREAD AND HOW CONTAGIOUS IS IT?
JN.1 spreads faster than its parent strains.
Its mutations help it attach more easily to human cells and dodge immune responses.
The virus spreads the same way as earlier Covid variants:
Airborne droplets from talking, coughing, or sneezing.
Close contact in crowded or poorly ventilated indoor spaces.
Contaminated surfaces (less common but still possible).
WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF JN.1 COVID INFECTIONS?
Sore throat
Runny or blocked nose
Dry cough
Fever and chills
Headache
Muscle aches
Fatigue or exhaustion
Nausea or diarrhoea
Loss of smell or taste
HOW IS JN.1 DETECTED THROUGH TESTING?
RT-PCR (gold standard, accurate but takes 24–48 hours).
Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) (faster but less sensitive).
Multiplex PCR tests (such as BioFire, QIAstat) that check for Covid along with other respiratory viruses.
PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES:
Wear a well-fitting mask in public indoor spaces.
Wash hands frequently.
Avoid crowded places if you're feeling unwell.
Stay home and isolate if you test positive.

PHOTO: PTI

Pahalgam victim's son to get free admission at RV

BENGALURU, 23 MAY

RV University has granted free admission to the son of Shivamogga-based realtor Manjunath Rao, who was killed in the Pahalgam attack. The decision follows an appeal by Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya, who had earlier promised support to the victims' families. Rao's son, Abhijaya M, has now joined the undergraduate programme at RV University's School of Business. Surya thanked the Rashtreeya Sikshana Samithi Trust (RSST) for backing the initiative, calling it a national duty to support affected families. Surya also announced that the Sarthaka Foundation has committed to supporting the educational needs of other survivors from Karnataka. He urged more institutions to come forward and help families impacted by the attack. ***—Salar News***

Metro services to start early today for UPSC aspirants

BENGALURU 23 MAY,

In a move aimed at facilitating hassle-free travel for candidates appearing for the UPSC Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination, Namma Metro will begin operations an hour earlier than usual on Sunday, 25 May. Train services from all four terminal stations—Whitefield (Kadugodi), Challaghatta, Madavara, and Silk Institute—will commence at 6am, instead of the regular 7am, the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) announced on Friday. The decision has been taken to help ensure timely access to exam centres for thousands of aspirants expected to travel across the City. Authorities have urged the public to make use of this facility and advised candidates to plan their travel well. ***—Salar News***

Centre to review metro phase-2, 3A proposals: Khattar

BENGALURU, 23 MAY

Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar announced that the Centre will review proposals for Bengaluru Metro Phase-2 and 3A once they receive approval from the State government. During a meeting focused on urban initiatives, he highlighted the importance of addressing legacy waste management and urged the state to utilise the Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment for urban reform. The Centre recently sanctioned a 45km Phase-3 network at a cost of Rs 15,600 crore and is assessing the 37km Phase-3A proposal, estimated at Rs 28,400 crore. Khattar urged the State to implement cost-reflective tariffs to reduce financial losses in power utilities. ***—PTI***

Marriage broker stabbed to death in Mangaluru

MANGALURU, 23 MAY

A 50-year-old marriage broker was stabbed to death, and his two sons were critically injured in a late-night attack in Valachil under Mangaluru Rural Police limits on Thursday. The accused, a relative of the deceased, has been arrested. According to the police, the deceased, Suleman, 50 had arranged the marriage of the accused, Mustafa, 30, with a woman, Shaheenaz, eight months ago. However, the marriage turned sour, and Shaheenaz returned to her parents' home two months back. Suleman, accompanied by his sons Riyab and Siyab, went to Mustafa's house in Valachil to resolve the matter. While the sons waited outside, Suleman spoke to Mustafa briefly before returning. Mustafa suddenly rushed out and stabbed Suleman in the neck, killing him on the spot. He then attacked both sons, before fleeing. ***—ANI***

Have donated to National Herald, says Shivakumar

Says he has made no effort to hide it; CM backs him

BENGALURU/ VIJAYAPURA, 23 MAY

- Shivakumar said both him and his brother DK Suresh donated Rs 25 lakh each. He hit back out at the backlash from former chief minister Kumaraswamy, calling him mentally unsound

Amid reports of his name figuring in the ED charge sheet in the National Herald case, State Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Friday said he and his brother DK Suresh have donated money to the Congress-run newspaper.

"Me and DK Suresh donated Rs 25 lakh each to National Herald. We have donated to a newspaper run by our party. What's wrong in that?" Shivakumar told reporters in Kolhar village in Vijayapura district.

When he was told that Rs 2.5 crore was donated, he said, "Yes we have given to the Trust. We are not denying it. Did we give it stealthily? No. We have openly given from our income."

Asserting that he has donated money, Shivakumar said he will continue to do the same in future as well. However, he alleged that there was politics behind mentioning his name in the ED chargesheet.

Lashing out at Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy for making false allegations against him, Shivakumar accused him of having lost his mental balance.

"Kumaraswamy is mental. His has lost his mental balance," he said replying to Kumaraswamy's allegation that the DCM had tipped off ED about Ranya Rao's smuggling case details.

State Chief Minister Siddaramaiah backed his deputy, saying there was nothing wrong in donating money. Reacting to the ED charge sheet, Siddaramaiah told reporters in Mysuru, "Is charity wrong? There is nothing wrong in donations."

Govt defends renaming Ramanagara

Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar defended renaming Ramanagara as Bengaluru South district after Kumaraswamy lashed out at the Congress government, accusing them of doing it to jack up land prices.

"Do they think they will remain in power permanently? The name they have given will be changed in the future," Kumaraswamy charged in New Delhi.

Shivakaumar, asked about the allegation that it was done for real estate gains said, "Yes, we want the values of our farmers' land to go up. We want our people to get more jobs. We want investors to come and develop this place." *—PTI*

BJP IT cell head Amit Malviya and Republic TV editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami ***PHOTO: X/@AMITMALVIYA***

HC stays cases against BJP IT cell chief, Arnab

BENGALURU, 23 MAY

The Karnataka High Court has granted an interim stay on criminal proceedings initiated against BJP leader Amit Malviya and Republic TV's Editor-in-Chief Arnab Goswami, in connection with allegations of spreading false claims that the Indian National Congress (INC) operates an office in Istanbul, Turkey.

Justice S Rachiah passed the order on Thursday while hearing petitions filed by both Malviya and Goswami, seeking the quashing of the cases lodged against them. The stay will remain in effect until the next hearing.

Senior Advocate Aruna Shyam, representing Malviya and Goswami, argued that the cases were politically driven and lacked substance. He highlighted inconsistencies in the application of legal provisions, particularly how an initially bailable charge under Section 352 of the BNS was reportedly upgraded to a non-bailable one under Section 353 after police approached a magistrate. Section 353 pertains to statements intended to incite public disorder.

Malviya is also facing a separate case over a controversial social media post in which he shared a morphed image showing half the face of Rahul Gandhi merged with that of Pakistan's Army Chief Asim Munir.

Both cases have now been stayed.

The Congress had filed multiple complaints across the country, including in State, accusing Malviya and Goswami of orchestrating a "criminally motivated campaign" to spread fabricated claims that the Istanbul Congress Centre in Turkey is an official Congress office. *—PTI*

Saleem to police: Prioritise victims, act with integrity

BENGALURU 23 MAY

MA Saleem ***PHOTO: SALAR***

In a candid letter to the State police on Friday, newly appointed Director General and Inspector General of Police (DG&IGP) MA Saleem, laid out his vision for policing: urging officers at all levels to shift from an "accused-centric" approach to a "victim-centric" one. He emphasised the need for transparent, professional, and humane policing that restores public confidence and delivers justice swiftly and decisively.

Saleem called for collective efforts to transform the police department into a public-friendly institution committed to law and order, communal harmony, and citizen safety. His 10-point directive prioritised effective crime prevention, timely investigation, and proactive measures against threats to public peace.

The letter came a day after Saleem addressed police personnel in a virtual introductory session on Thursday, dispensing with ceremonial salutes, handshakes, and the customary bouquets.

Acknowledging the human side of the force, he stressed the value of police personnel as the department's "greatest asset," advocating better work-life balance, mental wellness, and recognition for good service.

Special focus was placed on women and child safety, enforcing preventive laws, and creating awareness among the public.

"Let's commit to transparency, honesty, and efficiency to make Karnataka the safest and most liveable state in the country," Saleem concluded. *—Salar News*

AFTER SBI ROW, TECH FIRM SAYS BYE TO CITY

BENGALURU, 23 MAY

A Bengaluru-based tech entrepreneur has announced plans to close his company's local office in State and shift operations to Pune, citing concerns over "language intolerance." Kaushik Mukherjee, co-founder of the firm, revealed on X (formerly Twitter) that he will wind up the City office within six months, citing fears that non-Kannada speaking staff could become victims of regional bias. His decision follows a viral incident at an SBI branch in Chandapura, where a manager refused to speak Kannada to a customer, saying, "I will never speak in Kannada. Show me the rules." Mukherjee's post received criticism online, with many suggesting he and his staff should have learned Kannada. One user remarked, "Earning profits in Karnataka but no effort to learn the language isn't a good gesture at a private firm in Murugeshpalya, reportedly recorded the videos during his daily commute.

The Instagram handle had amassed nearly 6,000 followers before it went offline amid public backlash.

"A case has been registered at Banashankari police station. The accused has no prior criminal history but his actions were clearly perverse," said Lokesh B Jagalasar, DCP (Bengaluru South). *—Salar News*

BBMP launches health drive in Sai Layout

Following the relentless rain, normal life was severely impacted in the low-lying Sai Layout ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

BENGALURU 23 MAY

Following relentless rain and severe waterlogging in Sai Layout, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has launched a public health response to prevent diseases.

Mahadevapura Zonal Commissioner KN Ramesh led a health initiative through the BBMP's medical wing to mitigate the risks. Zonal Health Officer Dr Lokesh and Medical Health Officer Dr Vishweshwarayya set up a health camp in the locality.

Doctors and paramedics have been deployed to offer free check-ups, with essential medicines and an ambulance on standby. ASHA workers and nursing college students are conducting door-to-door awareness campaigns on dengue, and waterborne illnesses.

Speaking to Salar News, Vinutha R, a homemaker in Sai Layout said, "Yes, the BBMP has responded quickly this time in providing medication. But we really hope they don't stop here."

Meanwhile, the BBMP said that it will restart its drive to clear stormwater drain (rajakaluve) encroachments next week. *—Salar News*

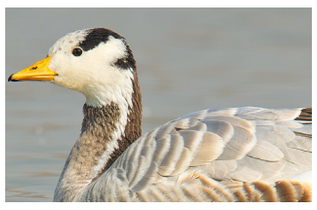
Darshan summoned over exotic bird

BENGALURU, 23 MAY

Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa, already facing legal scrutiny in the Renukaswamy murder case, has landed in fresh trouble. The forest department has issued summons to him and his wife Vijaya Lakshmi for allegedly keeping exotic birds at their farmhouse on T Narasipura Road in Mysuru.

The issue came to light in 2024 after Darshan, currently out on bail in the murder case, was seen in a media interview, showcasing bar-headed geese – classified as migratory and protected under the Wildlife Protection Act. Following the video, forest officials raided his farmhouse in Kempayana Hundi and seized the birds.

Darshan reportedly claimed that the birds were gifted to him by friends. However, bar-headed geese, which originate from Central Asia, is a protected species and cannot be kept in captivity without special permissions.



A case was registered under relevant wildlife laws, and the matter is now before a court in Mysuru district. The summons instructs Darshan and his wife to appear before the court on 4 July for a hearing.

Sources said Darshan's farmhouse also houses cows, oxen, horses, parrots and other birds, possibly increasing scrutiny. *—Salar News*

MAN HELD FOR FILMING WOMEN ON METRO

BENGALURU 23 MAY

A 27-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly filming women passengers without their consent on Bengaluru Metro trains and uploading the videos to Instagram.

The arrest was confirmed by police on Friday following widespread outrage over a now-defunct account called 'metro_chicks'.

The accused, a resident of Thigalarapalya and an accounts department employ-

Actress withdraws rape allegations against Manu

Madenur Manu ***PHOTO: SALAR***

BENGALURU, 23 MAY

The actress who filed a rape case against Kannada TV actor Madenur Manu in City has retracted her allegations, describing the matter as a "personal misunderstanding." The 33-year-old actress clarified that there was no malicious intent behind her earlier claims.

Hours after Manu's arrest on Wednesday, a video emerged in which the actress stated, "There were personal differences and a fight between us. I did send messages to producers, and I now realise that was a mistake." She explained that her messages were not meant to sabotage the upcoming film in which both actors are cast, emphasising that the issues between them were private.

She further added, "Whatever happened between Manu and me is personal. The messages I sent were not intended to harm the project." She also expressed that even if she faced repercussions, "no one—Manu, the producers, or the film team—should be blamed."

Meanwhile, police officials from Annapoorneshwari Nagar questioned Manu and seized his phone for forensic analysis, including call records and exchanged messages. Manu dismissed the allegations as "baseless," claiming they were an made to damage the film. *—Salar News*

MYSORE SOAP AMBASSADOR

Activists demand Tammannah's removal

BENGALURU/MYSURU 23 MAY

- Mysuru MP Yaduveer Krishnadutta Chamaraja Wadiyar called the appointment "inappropriate, irresponsible, and deeply disrespectful to Kannada identity."

Pro Kannada organisations protested in City demanding the removal of actress Tamannah Bhatia as the brand ambassador from Karnataka Soaps and detergents limited (KSDL).

The actress has been offered Rs 6.2 crore to work the brand.

Similarly, Mysuru MP Yaduveer Krishnadutta Chamaraja Wadiyar called it "inappropriate, irresponsible, and deeply disrespectful to Kannada identity."

According to a release, the MP called the decision to appointed an actor outside State as"foolish" and "insensitive".

He added that Bhattia has no connection with local culture, not even part of history, and does not even speak in Kannada.

Wadiyar urged the State government to withdraw the appointment.

Meanwhile, Karnataka Large and medium Industries Minister MB Patil said that the locals of State were extremely unhappy with the appointment.

Addressing a press conference, Patil said that the matter was not of language, but of earning global and national reputation through work.

"I am a person who has a lot of respect for Kannada identity. This is trade, business... and should be promoted to the world and across India," Patil told the media.

He further stated that Bhatia had been chosen as the brad ambassador because she had 2.8 crore followers and was the only suitable option, as Rashmika Mandanna had signed elsewhere, while actresses Pooja Hegde and Kiara Advani were not possible and Deepika Padukone would not fit in the budget.

"Our target is to reach Rs5,000 crore in sales by 2030, and in this context, a strong marketing strategy becomes vital. This appointment was made based on recommendations from marketing experts," he highlighted.

Patil added that there should be respect for Kannada artists, that this was not a tender work.

—Salar News with agencies

Tamannah Bhatia has been offered Rs 6.2 crore to work the Karnataka Soaps and detergents limited (KSDL), sparking massive backlash from pro-Kannada groups ***PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA***

Kumaraswamy says HM targeted due to power struggle

BENGALURU 23 MAY

Union Minister and former State chief minister HD Kumaraswamy on Friday alleged that Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara is being deliberately implicated in gold smuggling case involving Kannada actress Ranya Rao, as part of an internal power struggle within the ruling Congress party.

He also claimed that the motive is to sideline Parameshwara and derail his leadership ambitions. In a statement, Kumaraswamy noted that Parameshwara's recent moves to organise a dalit convention and engage with senior party leaders in New Delhi may have ruffled feathers in party.

He also referred to statements made by State Minister KN Rajanna in the assembly, hinting at surveillance and manipulation by a powerful political figure.

Union Minister also wondered how a Congress insider came to know about the alleged smuggling attempt involving an actress.

According to him, the gold smuggling case was being used to undermine Parameshwara's credibility and block his rise within the party. He raised doubts about whether the Intelligence Department, which reports directly to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, was truly unaware of everything.

A senior Congress leader, eyeing the CM's post, may be orchestrating the situation behind the scenes. Kumaraswamy criticised the Congress party for blaming the central government while ignoring the internal power politics. *—PTI*

Delhi Ramlila to screen Op Sindoor this Navratri

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

850 Ramlila committees across Delhi will hold a special daily screening of Operation Sindoor this Navratri as a tribute to the Indian armed forces. Ramlila performances in 2025 will begin with a special 15-20 minutes tribute, either a play, short film or a screening titled "SainyaShaurya: Operation Sindoor" before the main Ramayana enactment. The tribute performances will run from 22 September to 3 October, alongside Vijay Dashmi celebrations. The Mahasangh sought government land to set up a research centre dedicated to Ramlila traditions and the Ramayana. It also demanded free electricity, water, sanitation facilities and ground bookings for 45 days, similar to the arrangements made for the KanwarYatra and Hajj. *—PTI*

2 terror suspects sent to 7-day police custody

VIZIANAGARAM, 23 MAY

A local court has remanded two terror suspects to seven days' police custody, according to officials. Siraj Ur Rehman, 29, and Syed Sameer, 28, were detained during a joint operation by Andhra Pradesh and Telangana police on Saturday, with explosives recovered from Rehman's premises. Additional Superintendent of Police, Sowmya Lata, confirmed that court approved the seven-day custody. They are currently held at Visakhapatnam Central Prison. Authorities indicated that, subject to directives from Ministry of Home Affairs, the case could be transferred to the National Investigation Agency. Rehman was arrested after a tip-off, based on his confession, Sameer was apprehended in Boiguda, Hyderabad. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

EC probes West Bengal BJP Chief's wife for 2 voter IDs

KOLKATA, 23 MAY

Election Commission (EC) has launched an inquiry into a complaint alleging that Koel Majumdar, wife of BJP's West Bengal President and Union Minister Sukanta Majumdar, holds two voter identity cards. Initial investigations revealed that Koel Majumdar possesses two voter IDs with different EPIC numbers—registered in Balurghat & Jalpaiguri. The card issued in Jalpaiguri was under her maiden name, Koel Chowdhury, while other, created after her marriage, bears her married name, Koel Majumdar. An EC official explained that this discrepancy could have been avoided if she had submitted Form 18, which notifies commission of name or address changes. *—PTI*

Loan fraud: FIR against ex-Cong MP & VC of ANSCBL

PORT BLAIR, 23 MAY

An FIR has been lodged against Vice Chairman of Andaman and Nicobar State Cooperative Bank Ltd (ANSCBL) and former Congress MP Kuldeep Rai Sharma in connection with alleged gross irregularities in sanctioning huge amounts of loans to various people, a police officer said on Friday. Those named in the FIR include former chairman of ANSCB late Bhagat Singh, vice chairman Kuldeep Rai Sharma, board and directors/officials of ANSCB and other beneficiaries, the officer said. There are allegations that the managing committee of the ANSCB overlooked the recommendations of the loan screening committee and ignored the CIBIL report and mandatory documents while sanctioning loans, a police source said. *—PTI*

No point if Russia doesn't talk: EAM on West diplomacy

All-party delegation meet top leaders in Russia, Japan, UAE

COPENHAGEN/ MOSCOW/ TOKYO/ABU DHABI, 23 MAY

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar *PHOTO: PTI*

As the Ukraine conflict moves into its fourth year, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has questioned the logic of Western efforts to broker peace while excluding Russia from the talks. Speaking to Denmark's TV2 Channel during his recent visit to Europe, Jaishankar asked, "What's the point of gathering everybody else and not having Russia in the room?" Jaishankar noted that while the West demands others cut ties with Moscow, European nations themselves continue to import Russian energy.

"From the very start, we've said you're not going to get a solution to the Ukraine conflict from the battlefield," he said. "There's got to be dialogue, there's got to be diplomacy, and there's got to be direct contact." Jaishankar's comments are notably similar to the views expressed by US President Donald Trump.

Meanwhile, Indian Parliamentary delegations on Friday put across New Delhi's "zero-tolerance" policy on terrorism to top officials in Russia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Japan and exchanged views on furthering cooperation in counter-terrorism and combating radicalism following Operation Sindoor. In Moscow, the delegation led by DMK MP Kanimozhi Karunanidhi met Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation Andrey Rudenko, a month after the Pahalgam attack.

In Japan, the delegation led by JD(U) MP Sanjay Jha held a "focused and lively" press engagement at the Indian Embassy in Tokyo. "All parties resolved to stand united in all matters of national interest," the Embassy said in a post on X.

In UAE, the delegation led by Shiv Sena MP Shrikant Shinde, sent a "strong message of harmony, tolerance and peaceful coexistence - the values shared & cherished by India and UAE," the Indian Embassy in Abu Dhabi said.

Germany lends support

Germany has extended its support to India, saying that the country had every right to defend itself against terrorism. German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul sympathised with the victims and their families.

Jaishankar added that India will never submit to nuclear blackmail. *–PTI/Agencies*

All-party delegation led by Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam MP Kanimozhi receives a warm welcome from the Indian Ambassador to Russian Federation Vinay Kumar on their arrival at Domodedovo International Airport for Operation Sindoor global outreach, in Moscow *PHOTO: ANI*

Flight carrying Indian delegation delayed by 40 mins due to war

MOSCOW, 23 MAY

A flight carrying a delegation of Indian parliamentarians among other passengers had an arrival delay of around 40 minutes on Thursday in view of brief shutting of airports in the Russian capital following a barrage of overnight drone strikes, people familiar with the matter said. Russian authorities said 153 flights were impacted due to what they called "temporary flight restrictions". Russian capital had become the target of dozens of Ukrainian drone attacks forcing closure of all airports, the people cited above said. Some flights were diverted to different airports, it is learnt. *– PTI*

All-party delegation led by JD(U) MP Sanjay Jha in Japan to sensitise global leaders on terror emanating from Pakistan *PHOTO: ANI*

Indian delegation, Japan take unified stance against terrorism

TOKYO, 23 MAY

An Indian Parliamentary delegation on Friday highlighted India's unified and determined stance against terrorism, as it met members of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party. All-party delegation led by JD(U) MP Sanjay Jha is in Japan to sensitise global leadership about terror emanating from Pakistan. The delegation also held fruitful interaction with Minoru Kihara, Former Defence Minister of Japan, and Shinako Tsuchiya, Director General of International Bureau, Liberal Democratic Party. *– PTI*

Pakistan met all conditions: IMF defends financial aid to Islamabad

WASHINGTON, 23 MAY

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has said its executive board granted USD 1 billion in assistance to Pakistan this month after finding out that the country met all conditions and targets for it. The IMF carried out a review of its extended fund facility (EFF) granted to Pakistan in September last year and based on it, the board approved the amount on May 9, said Julie Kozack, a director at global body's communications department. The IMF executive board approved the fresh assistance to Pakistan notwithstanding New Delhi's apprehensions that the funds could be used for cross-border terrorism. *– PTI*

India urges FATF to put Pakistan back in 'grey list'

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

India will make a strong case with FATF to revert Pakistan to its "grey list" for failure to comply with anti-money laundering and terror financing rules, a government source said.

Tensions between India and Pakistan have heightened following the terror attack in Pahalgam.

India feels that Pakistan has failed to act on terror emanating from its territory and has been diverting funds from multilateral agencies to buy arms and ammunition.

Countries which fail to address strategic deficiencies in their regimes to counter money laundering, terrorist financing, and proliferation financing, and are under increased monitoring, are placed in the grey list of FATF. *– PTI*

Andaman airspace closed for 3 hours for weapon test

A Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher of Defence Research and Development Organisation, test fires a Pinaka rocket *PHOTO: PTI*

PORT BLAIR, 23 MAY

The airspace over Andaman and Nicobar Islands was closed for three hours from 7am on Friday for high altitude weapon test by the tri-services command, an official said.

A senior Andaman and Nicobar Command official said, "Like today, the airspace over and around Andaman and Nicobar Islands will be closed tomorrow for three hours (7 am to 10 am). We have already issued Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) on 16 May and instructed that no civilian aircraft will be allowed to fly over Andaman on 23 May and 24 May."

"Airspace over and around the Andaman and Nicobar Islands with maximum corridor length of around 500 km will be restricted between 7am and 10am IST on 23 and 24 May," the excerpts of the NOTAM said.

In the context of airspace closure, the official said, "We have successfully done a high-altitude weapon test today and tomorrow a similar test will be done. This is a routine practice here in Andaman and Nicobar Islands as we have done similar tests in the past also." *—PTI*

US again claims role in averting India-Pak conflict

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 23 MAY

The United States has expressed satisfaction that its involvement played a pivotal role in averting a potential full-scale war between India and Pakistan. State Department Spokesperson Tammy Bruce remarked during a press briefing that "it is heartening" to see that American assistance contributed to the ongoing ceasefire in the region, amid longstanding concerns over violence and terrorism.

Bruce's comments came in response to inquiries regarding US-India relations and the issue of terrorism originating from Pakistan.

She noted that there was a significant risk of escalating conflict, but America's diplomatic efforts were instrumental in fostering a ceasefire, which is currently being upheld.

However, she acknowledged that underlying tensions between the two nations remain unresolved, indicating the need for long-term solutions.

US President Donald Trump has previously claimed that his administration played a key role in brokering this ceasefire. *—PTI*

GOODBYE BRAVEHEART

Chief of Staff of White Knight Corps Major General Shailendra Singh on Friday led the wreath-laying ceremony for Sepoy Gaykar Sandip Pandurang, who was killed in an encounter with terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district at the military hospital in Jammu *PHOTO: PTI*

Kavitha's feedback letter speculates BRS-BJP tie-up

HYDERABAD, 23 MAY

A handwritten "feedback" letter allegedly penned by BRS leader K Kavitha to her father, former Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, has stirred discussions across Telangana's political circles. The letter, which criticises the party's recent meeting, has not been officially confirmed, with neither Kavitha's office nor KCR's commenting on its authenticity.

In the message, Kavitha expressed disappointment over Rao's brief two-minute speech, which she felt led to speculation about a potential alliance with the BJP. She urged her father to speak more strongly against the BJP, citing her own negative experiences with the party. She criticised Rao's silence on key issues such as reservations for backward classes, SC categorisation, and Waqf Amendment Act, highlighting her concerns about the party's direction.

BRS leader K Kavitha *PHOTO: X*

Kavitha also noted that grassroots support for the Congress had waned, with some BRS cadres considering the BJP as an alternative. She suggested the party should hold a plenary to address internal issues and set clear guidelines. Despite the controversy, Kavitha is currently abroad, attending her son's graduation.

Opposition figures criticised the letter, with Congress MLA Beerla Ilaiah Yadav alleging Kavitha exposed BRS's neglect of minorities and Urdu, implying tacit BJP support. *—PTI*

MNS mulls alliance with SS (UBT) on 'concrete proposal'

MUMBAI, 23 MAY

Sandeep Deshpande, a senior leader of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), stated that Raj Thackeray would consider forming an alliance with Shiv Sena (UBT) only if a concrete proposal is made. He noted previous attempts at tie-ups in 2014 and 2017, which he described as betrayals.

Deshpande highlighted Raj Thackeray's recent interview, where he expressed openness to talks with Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT), led by his estranged cousin. However, he clarified Raj did not explicitly endorse an alliance, only indicating willingness to consider if Shiv Sena (UBT) shows genuine interest.

MNS leader called for a substantial proposal from Shiv Sena (UBT) to initiate discussions. He also mentioned that no official communication has been received. *—PTI*

FIFTH-CENTURY VESSEL

'Ajanta Cave 17 merchant ship inspired INSV Kaundinya'

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 23 MAY

A painting of a "merchant ship" at Ajanta Cave No 17, indicating sea trade during the fifth century, inspired the Indian Navy's traditionally-built stitched vessel INSV Kaundinya, an expert has said.

The Indian Navy on Wednesday inducted INSV Kaundinya, a recreation of a fifth-century vessel, named in honour of legendary Indian mariner Kaundinya, who once sailed across the Indian Ocean to Southeast Asia.

An Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) official, who is also an expert on the world-famous Ajanta caves, said, "The ship depicted in Cave 17 resembles a merchant vessel, indicating the existence of maritime trade during the fifth century."

Merchant ship *PHOTO: ANI*

- Another official described the artwork as one of the earliest surviving visual records of trade through the sea route from that era.

Another official described the artwork as one of the earliest surviving visual records of trade through the sea route from that era.

The late historian Walter Spink, in his book "Ajanta: A brief history and guide", wrote about Cave 17. According to the book, its excavation was sponsored by Upendragupta (in the fifth century), the feudatory ruler of the Ajanta. However, the work came to a halt after he was defeated by the Asmakas in 471 CE.

Art historian Saili Palande-Datar linked this painting to the Purna Avadana, a narrative from Buddhist literature. She said several Ajanta caves feature paintings of ships.

During the trip, Bhavila was stopped by a "Yaksha" named Maheshwar, who tried to sink the ship, said the art historian. *– PTI*

NORTH-EAST PART OF INDIA IS MOST DIVERSE: PM MODI

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday addressed the inaugural ceremony of the Rising North East Summit at the Bharat Mandapam in Delhi. Speaking at the summit the Prime Minister stated that from trade to tradition, from textiles to tourism the north-east of the country is the most diverse part of our diverse India.

PM also highlighted the immense potential of the North East region and its

PM Narendra Modi *PHOTO: X*

importance in the country's development journey.

He said, "Our India is called the most diverse nation in the world, and our Northeast is the most diverse part of this diverse nation, from trade to tradition, from textiles to tourism, its diversity is its greatest strength."

PM Modi further explained the various strengths of the region.

He described the region as Ashtalakshmi, referring to the Hindu goddess of wealth.

The Prime Minister also highlighted the importance of developing Eastern India in the mission to build a Viksit Bharat (Developed India). *– ANI*

Forest officials rescue leopard from well in MP

INDORE, 23 MAY

A leopard was rescued after falling into a well in Madhya Pradesh's Indore district on Friday, officials confirmed. The big cat had fallen into a well located in a field in Datoda village, approximately 20 kilometres from Indore city. Forest Ranger Yogesh Yadav explained that villagers had gathered around the well as rescue operations were underway. A team from the forest department successfully retrieved the leopard, which was then transported to Indore Zoo for observation. After a thorough health check, the animal is expected to be released back into its natural habitat. Yadav noted that during hot weather, leopards often venture out of forests in search of food and water, sometimes wandering close to human settlements. *—PTI*

Pregnant woman in R'than dies of blood mismatch

JAIPUR, 22 MAY

A 23-year-old pregnant woman from Tonk district died at Sawai Man Singh (SMS) Hospital in Rajasthan's Jaipur. Her family claimed that she was given incompatible blood. Chaina was admitted on 12 May with critically low haemoglobin, miliary tuberculosis, and other health issues. She passed away on Wednesday. On 19 May, a blood transfusion was requested after her blood group was reportedly identified as A+. The following day, she received blood, but a subsequent test suggested her blood group was B+. This raised concerns of a mismatch. The transfusion reaction reportedly caused symptoms including fever, chills, haematuria, and tachycardia. The doctor treating her was on leave during the transfusion and that Chaina was already critically ill. *—PTI*

Odisha police arrest illegal arms racket kingpin

BHUBANESWAR, 23 MAY

The Odisha Police's Special Task Force (STF) has arrested Md Aslam, the alleged mastermind of an illegal arms racket in Odisha from Bihar. STF DIG Pinak Mishra confirmed that officers, with Munger police assistance, apprehended Aslam on 20 May. He was wanted in connection with a firearms manufacturing case in Cuttack district. Authorities had discovered a clandestine weapons factory on 13 March in Bada Dhuleswar village, seizing large quantities of materials for 7 mm pistols, and arresting five suspects, including Md Azam and Md Abid Husain. Mishra revealed Aslam had visited the village multiple times to collect incomplete firearms. The police believe Aslam was involved in crimes in Bihar and Kolkata. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Police to restrict visitors' entry at Salman's home

MUMBAI, 23 MAY

The Mumbai police will impose restrictions on visitors' access at Galaxy Apartments, the residence of Bollywood star Salman Khan in Bandra, due to recent trespassing incidents. Khan, who has faced threats from the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, is currently under Y-plus security protection. A a man and a woman were arrested for separate trespassing offences at Khan's residence. New visitors will be required to verify their identity with the building's residents before being granted entry. Police are exploring enhanced security arrangements at the property. The measures aim to ensure the safety of residents and maintain the integrity of the premises. The local community and visitors will have to adhere to the new protocols. *—PTI*

SC: Why student suicides take place only in Kota?

SC questions delay in filing FIR in a student's suicide

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

The Supreme Court on Friday grilled the Rajasthan government over 14 students committing suicide in Kota this year, calling the situation "serious".

A bench of Justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan said 14 suicide cases were reported from the city in 2025.

"…. Why are these children dying by suicide and only in Kota?" Justice Pardiwala asked.

The counsel for Rajasthan said a special investigation team was formed in the state to examine cases of suicides.

The top court heard a matter over the death of a 22-year-old student studying in IIT, Kharagpur found hanging in his hostel room on 4 May. It also dealt with a NEET aspirant found hanging in her room in Kota where she lived with her parents. An FIR was lodged in connection with the death of IIT Kharagpur's student.

The top court questioned the four-day delay in registering the FIR.

The bench referred to SC's earlier verdict, which took note of recurring cases of student suicides in higher educational institutions and formed a national task force to address the mental health concerns of students.

The police officer said the FIR was lodged and an investigation was underway.

The counsel said that IIT Kharagpur authorities had alerted the police after learning about the suicide.

The bench was not convinced with the counsel and police's explanations.

In the Kota suicide case, the bench disapproved non filing of the FIR.

The task force constituted by the apex court would take its time before giving a composite report to the court.

The bench, as a result, summoned the police officer concerned in the Kota case on July 14 to explain the situation. *—PTI*

The counsel for Rajasthan said a special investigation team was formed in the state to examine cases of suicides PHOTO: PTI

SC notice to Centre on betting apps

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

The Supreme Court on Friday sought the Centre's response on a PIL seeking to regulate betting applications.

Petitioner KA Paul said many children committed suicide after getting involved in online betting and gambling applications promoted by online influencers, actors and cricketers.

Over 1,023 people committed suicide in Telangana.

The bench said these were aberrations of society and enactment of law cannot stop people indulging in betting voluntarily. *—PTI*

The 48-hour bandh was called by the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity against the removal of the state's name from state transport buses PHOTO: PTI

Manipur NIA court to decide on ethnic violence

NEW DELHI/IMPHAL, 23 MAY

A session's court in Manipur's Churachandpur has been designated as a special National Investigation Agency (NIA) court for the trial of cases related to ethnic violence being investigated by the agency.

In a notification on Thursday, the Ministry of Home Affairs said the court of Churachandpur district and sessions judge has been designated as a special court under Section 11 of the National Investigation Agency Act, 2008 (34 of 2008).

The jurisdiction of the special court shall extend throughout Manipur.

The NIA took over three key cases related to ethnic violence that began on 3 May, 2023, including the abduction and killing of six women and children in Jiribam.

The NIA registered these cases in November 2024.

Meanwhile, the 48-hour state-wide bandh called by the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity against the removal of the state's name from a government bus affected normal life in the five districts of Imphal Valley for the second day on Friday.

Business establishments, educational institutions and government and private offices remained closed and public transport was stalled. *—PTI*

Teachers and non-teaching staff of the West Bengal government, who have been rendered jobless following a Supreme Court order, stage a protest at Kharagpur in West Midnapore district of West Bengal PHOTO: PTI

Cal HC directs teachers to shift protest venue

KOLKATA, 23 MAY

The Calcutta High Court has directed protesting teachers and staff of West Bengal government schools, who lost their jobs following a Supreme Court ruling, to relocate their demonstration for public convenience. The court also limited the number of protesters to 200 at a time.

Justice Tirthankar Ghosh ordered the protesters to shift from their current location in front of Bikash Bhavan to Central Park in Salt Lake, opposite the education department headquarters. The Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation was instructed to provide amenities such as drinking water and bio-toilets at the new site.

The court emphasised that only 200 participants could be present during any protest, with additional supporters needing police approval. The forum organising the protest must submit a list of 10 authorised representatives for discussions with authorities.

Addressing concerns over the summer heat, the judge suggested temporary shelters for protesters and urged the administration to adopt a humane approach. It also noted there had been no incidents since a scuffle on 15 May and advised law enforcement to proceed cautiously with the accused. *—PTI*

4 Maoists gunned down in M'rashtra

GADCHIROLI, 23 MAY

In a joint operation, police's special commando unit C-60 and the CRPF killed four Maoists in an encounter along the Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district bordering Chhattisgarh on Friday, a senior official said.

The official, in a statement, informed that based on credible intelligence inputs about the presence of Maoists formations on the Maharashtra–Chhattisgarh border near a recently opened FOB (Forward Operating Base) in Kawande area, an operation was launched on Thursday afternoon.

A dozen C-60 parties (300 commandoes) and a component of the CRPF launched the operation from Kawande and Nelgunda areas towards the banks of the Indravati river amidst heavy rains, it said.

On Friday morning, when the cordon was being laid and river banks were being searched, Maoists started indiscriminate firing on C-60 commandoes, leading to an effective retaliation by security forces in Gadchiroli district in eastern Maharashtra, said the official.

Intermittent exchange of fire continued for almost two hours and a search of the area by security forces later led to the recovery of bodies of four Maoists, he added. *—PTI*

President Droupadi Murmu confers Shaurya Chakra upon Pawan Kumar, Ct/GD, CRPF (posthumous) during the Defence Investiture Ceremony-2025 (Phase-I) at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi PHOTO: ANI

COBRA COMMANDOES HONOURED WITH SHAURYA CHAKRA

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

Two CoBRA commandoes of the CRPF, who displayed raw courage before being fatally shot by a Maoist sniper while establishing a new base deep inside a Naxal stronghold in Chhattisgarh, is among the seven personnel of the paramilitary honoured with the 'Shaurya Chakra' gallantry medal. Constable Pawan Kumar of 201 CoBRA battalion and his fellow Constable Devan C were awarded the military medal posthumously during the defence investiture ceremony held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Thursday. The country's largest paramilitary force received the bravery decorations for two operations undertaken in the Left Wing Extremism theatre, five personnel in one and two in the other. Kumar, according to his citation, was "fatally shot by a sniper" at Tekalgudium in the Naxal "stronghold" district of Sukma in Chhattisgarh on 30 January, 2024. Kumar and Devan C "risked their lives by fiercely engaging advancing Naxals" and were killed in action, sources said. —PTI

ED RAIDS MULTIPLE FIRMS IN ₹12,000 CR FRAUD CASE

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday conducted searches at multiple locations as part of a money laundering probe against Jaypee Infratech, Jaypee Associates and some others in a Rs 12,000 crore investment fraud case, official sources said.

The raids are being carried out in Delhi-NCR and Mumbai under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the sources said on Friday.

The searches are in the case related to Jaypee Infratech, Jaypee Associates Limited and others for alleged fraud with homebuyers and investors of around Rs 12,000 crore and linked "diversion" of funds, they said.

Asociated entities of the group like Gaursons, Gulshan, Mahagun and Suraksha Reality are also being covered, the sources said.

There was no immediate response from the companies concerned. *—PTI*

Medico gangraped in Sangli, two held

MUMBAI, BILASPUR, 23 MAY

In recent troubling incidents in India, a third-year MBBS student has allegedly been gangraped in Maharashtra's Sangli district by two classmates and a friend after they spiked her drink. The 22-year-old student, originally from Belagavi in Karnataka, reported that the attack occurred on 18 May after the group had planned to watch a movie. The accused, aged between 20 and 22, have been arrested and remanded in police custody until 27 May under charges of gangrape.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

In a separate case, the director-cum-principal of Bandla Hydro Engineering College in Himachal Pradesh's Bilaspur has been arrested following complaints of sexual harassment by female students. A video of an alleged incident involving the accused went viral, prompting protests from students for his immediate arrest. Both cases highlight serious concerns regarding the safety of students in educational institutions, with investigations ongoing in both matters. The technical education department has stated that action will be taken following a report submitted by a committee reviewing the allegations against the college principal. *—PTI*

ALERTS ISSUED

Rains, thunderstorms predicted in many states

AMRAVATI /RANCHI/ MUMBAI / T'PURAM, 23 MAY

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Friday forecast heavy rains and thunderstorms in different parts of the country in the next few days.

Jharkhand

The IMD issued an orange alert for thunderstorms and winds with maximum speed up to 60 kmph for southern, central and north-east parts of Jharkhand.

Heavy rainfall will occur from 30 May to 5 June.

Thunderstorms accompanied by rain have been predicted at a few places over Chatra, Garhwa, Gumla, Hazaribag, Koderma, Latehar, Lohardaga, Palamu and Ranchi on Friday.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Andhra Pradesh

The IMD predicted thunderstorms at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh (NCAP), Yanam, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema.

Isolated places over NCAP and Yanam are likely to receive heavy rainfall on 27 May.

Maharashtra

An orange alert predicting very heavy rainfall was issued for Sindhudurg and Ratnagiri, Raigad, Thane and Palghar in Maharashtra beginning 24 May. Mumbai may experience thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and rainfall.

Ghat regions of Pune, Kolhapur, and Satara may witness heavy to very heavy rainfall, while the ghat areas of Nashik may receive rainfall of a slightly lower intensity.

Kerala

An orange alert was issued in Thrissur, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasaragod districts.

Monsoon will arrive in Kerala in the next two days.

A red alert has been issued in Kannur and Kasaragod from 24 May to 26 , in Malappuram, Kozhikode and Wayanad for 25 May and 26 and in Pathanamthitta and Idukki for 26 May. *—PTI*

Hottest day in Jammu, Srinagar; more to come

MENDHAR/ JAMMU, 23 MAY

Jammu and Kashmir reeled under extreme heat wave conditions, with several parts in the region experiencing the highest temperatures of the season so far.

Jammu recorded a scorching 41.4°Celsius, marking the hottest day of the year on 21 May.

Srinagar too recorded the highest May temperature in 57 years at 34.4°Celsius on 22 May.

Kokernag in Anantnag district recorded 33.3°Celsius on 22 May while Qazigund recorded 33.2°Celsius. Other places also reeled under heat with Pahalgam recording 25.8°Celsius, Kupwara at 30.0°Celsius and Gulmarg at 23.2°Celsius.

In the Jammu division, Katra reported 36.8°Celsius, Banihal 30.4°Celsius, Batote 30.1°Celsius and Bhaderwah 31.3°Celsius.

Meanwhile, the Indian Meteorological Department predicted maximum temperatures to increase by 1 to 2°Celsius across the Kashmir region till Friday.

Dry and intense weather will persist till 26 May. Brief spells of light rain will occur at isolated places.

Several landmines exploded due to a forest fire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district on Friday, though no casualty was reported.

Army joined the forest department officials and local residents in extinguishing the fire. *—PTI*

SUMMER DAY PLAYTIME

Bengal Tiger Bheem plays with a water sprinkler inside its enclosure on a hot summer day, at the Nahargarh Biological Park in Jaipur, on Friday
PHOTO: PTI

Mothers, babies in Gaza face severe starvation

Mayar is among the more than 9,000 children who have been treated for malnutrition this year, said UN children's agency
PHOTO: FREEPIK

Grabbing her daughter's feeble arm, Asmaa al-Arja pulls a shirt over the 2-year-old's protruding ribs and swollen belly. The child lies on a hospital bed, heaving, then wails uncontrollably, throwing her arms around her own shoulders as if to console herself.

This isn't the first time Mayar has been in a Gaza hospital battling malnutrition, yet this 17-day stint is the longest. She has celiac disease, an autoimmune disorder that means she can't eat gluten and requires special food. But there's little left for her to eat in the embattled enclave after 19 months of war and Israel's punishing blockade, and she can't digest what's available.

"She needs diapers, soy milk and she needs special food. This is not available because of border closures. If it's available, it is expensive, I can't afford it," her mother said as she sat next to Mayar, now exhausted from the screaming, at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis.

Mayar is among the more than 9,000 children who have been treated for malnutrition this year, according to the UN children's agency, and food security experts say tens of thousands of cases are expected in the coming year.

Experts also warn the territory could plunge into famine if Israel doesn't stop its military campaign and fully lift its blockade — but the World Health Organisation said last week that people are already starving.

For more than two months, Israel has banned all food, medicine and other goods from entering the territory that is home to some 2 million Palestinians, as it carries out waves of airstrikes and ground operations. Palestinians in Gaza rely almost entirely on outside aid to survive because Israel's offensive has destroyed almost all the territory's food production capabilities.

After weeks of insisting Gaza had enough food, Israel relented in the face of international pressure and began allowing dozens of humanitarian trucks into the territory this week — including some carrying baby food. But UN agencies say the amount is woefully insufficient, compared to around 600 trucks a day that entered during a recent ceasefire and that are necessary to meet basic needs. And they have struggled to retrieve the aid and distribute it, blaming complicated Israeli military procedures and the breakdown of law and order inside the territory.

On Wednesday, a UN official said more than a dozen trucks arrived at warehouses in central Gaza. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to talk to the press. That appeared to be the first aid to actually reach a distribution point since the blockade was lifted. On top of not being able to find or afford the food that Mayar needs, her mother said chronic diarrhea linked to celiac disease has kept the child in and out of hospital all year. But it's getting harder to help her as supplies like baby formula are disappearing, say health staff.

Hospitals are hanging by a thread, dealing with mass casualties from Israeli strikes. Packed hospital feeding centres are overwhelmed with patients.

"We have nothing at Nasser Hospital," said Dr. Ahmed al-Farrah, who said his emergency centre for malnourished children is at full capacity. Supplies are running out, people are living off scraps, and the situation is catastrophic for babies and pregnant women, he said.

In the feeding centre of the hospital, malnourished mothers console their hungry children — some so frail their spines jut out of their skin, their legs swollen from lack food. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, a leading international authority on the severity of hunger crises, has warned that there could be some 71,000 cases of malnourished children between now and March.

In addition, nearly 17,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women will need treatment for acute malnutrition in the coming months.

Mai Namleh and her 18-month-old son, who live in a tent, are both malnourished. She wanted to wean him off of breastmilk because she barely has any, but she has so little else to give him.

She gives him heavily watered-down formula to ration it, and sometimes offers him starch to quiet his hunger screams. An aid group gave her around 30 packets of nutritional supplements, but they ran out in two days as she shared them with family and friends, she said.

In another tent, Nouf al-Arja says she paid a fortune for a hard-to-find kg of red lentils. The family cooks it with a lot of water so it lasts, unsure what they will eat next. The mother of four has lost 23kgs and struggles to focus, saying she constantly feels dizzy.

Both she and her 3-year-old daughter are malnourished, doctors said. She's worried her baby boy, born four months earlier and massively underweight, will suffer the same fate. *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Critical minerals supply dominated by China: IEA

The world's sources of critical minerals are increasingly concentrated in just a few countries, most notably China, leaving the global economy vulnerable to supply cutoffs that could disrupt economies and hit consumers with higher prices, a report said Wednesday.

The Paris-based International Energy Agency's report looked at the availability of minerals and metals that may be small in quantity — but large in impact when it comes to shifting the economy away from fossil fuels toward electricity and renewable energy.

It found that for copper, lithium, cobalt, graphite and rare earth elements, the average market share of the three top producing countries rose to 86 per cent in 2024 from 82 per cent in 2020.

China is the leading refiner for 19 out of 20 strategic minerals studied in the report, and has an average share of around 75 per cent. Indonesia showed strong growth in nickel, a key component in making steel and batteries for electric vehicles.

The current trend toward export restrictions and trade disputes increases concerns, the IEA said.

"Critical mineral supply chains can be highly vulnerable to supply shocks, be they from extreme weather, a technical failure or trade disruptions," said IEA executive director Fatih Birol. "The impact of a supply shock can be far-reaching, bringing higher prices for consumers and reducing industrial competitiveness."

Birol cited the energy crisis in Europe after Russia cut off natural gas supplies over the invasion of Ukraine. Another cautionary tale is the global shortage of silicon-based computer chips during and after the pandemic, which disrupted auto production.

"The golden rule of energy security is diversification," Birol told The Associated Press in an interview. "And it goes beyond energy security, it is also economic security."

Market forces are important in developing new sources but won't be enough. "There is a need for well-designed government policies" in the form of financing and other measures, he said.

China is a massive global source of critical minerals required for a wide range of goods that includes computer chips, robots, electric autos, batteries, drones, and military equipment. It also dominates the refining and processing of many of these critical minerals, including lithium, cobalt, graphite and more.

China has placed export limits of many of these key products and tightened controls on others as President Donald Trump's trade negotiations escalate, stifling US industry and the nation's ability to find quick alternatives. Without access to China's significant reserves, US manufacturers have a harder time competing amid mounting global supply tensions.

Trump has made reducing US dependence on foreign critical minerals a core tenet of his first 100 days back in office as part of a national security and economic resilience agenda. This goes beyond China; the Trump administration finalized a rocky deal with Ukraine granting American access to the nation's vast mineral resources earlier this month. Trump is also looking to expedite deep-sea mining in international waters, much to the chagrin of environmental groups. He called for a boost in the domestic copper industry in a February executive order alongside other calls for the federal government to fast-track new mine permits; has reviewed a minerals proposal from Congo, a conflict-riddled nation also rich with mineral reserves; and attempted to strong-arm Greenland into providing more of its minerals to US.

The IEA report said that global markets were well supplied at the moment and that prices in general have fallen. It warned however that planned production of copper, which is essential for electric wiring and power grids, would not keep pace with demand and predicted a 30 per cent shortfall by 2030. *—PTI*

The current trend toward export restrictions and trade disputes increases concerns, the International Energy Agency's report said
PHOTO: FREEPIK

Can India replace China for Apple's iPhones?

US tech giant Apple said this month that India would play a major role in making iPhones for the US market
PHOTO: PTI

AhApple has traditionally relied heavily on Chinese factories to make its products. The tech giant is now planning to significantly boost production in India.

US tech giant Apple said this month that India would play a major role in making iPhones for the US market.

He also noted that Vietnam would be producing nearly all iPads, Macs, Apple Watches and AirPods to be sold in the US.

The decision was aimed at mitigating the impact of US President Donald Trump's tariff onslaught on the tech giant's supply chains as well as sales and profit margins.

Apple shifting some more of its iPhone production to India presents not only a big opportunity but also some potential challenges, said Lekha Chakraborty, senior economist at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy.

"A nuanced analysis reveals potential challenges including cost competitiveness vis-a-vis China, labor market rigidities, and supply chain vulnerabilities," she told DW.

Chakraborty underscored that making iPhones in India is 5-10 per cent more expensive, pointing to costlier parts and relatively inefficient factories.

An estimated 20 per cent of iPhones are currently being made in India. According to Bloomberg, Apple produced USD 22 billion worth of iPhones in India in the 12 months through March 2025, marking a 60 per cent jump from the prior year.

The US company plans to produce over 60 million iPhones annually in the South Asian country by 2026, doubling current output and significantly strengthening India's electronics manufacturing sector.

In India, iPhones are assembled by three primary contract manufacturers — Foxconn, Pegatron Corp and a Tata Group company that's formerly known as Wistron. Foxconn is the largest of the three, handling the majority of iPhone production in the South Asian nation.

The Indian government also recently announced a new policy aimed at strengthening the nation's electronics manufacturing ecosystem.

The production shift represents a significant change for Apple, which has traditionally relied heavily on Chinese factories to make its products.

But Trump's hefty duties on imports to the US, especially the tit-for-tat tariff exchanges with China, put the company in a difficult spot and forced it to rethink its strategy.

The US president has since granted a temporary reprieve for tech products, including smartphones and semiconductors. Washington and Beijing also agreed over the weekend to hit a 90-day pause on their tariff dispute.

To transition into a truly independent manufacturing hub for Apple, India will need to invest heavily in infrastructure, skills and technology, Shrijay Sheth, founder of LegalWiz.in, a consultancy firm, told DW.

Sheth believes shifting a major chunk of production away from China to India will likely face impediments in terms of technology and expertise transfer.

"It is naive to hope that the Chinese expertise plus skill transfer and production machinery would be transferred with the required speed given the current geopolitical scenario and especially when China loses a significant source of manufacturing jobs," he stressed.

Nikul Shah, co-founder and CEO of IndieSemic, which specializes in semiconductor and embedded systems, believes that India has the capacity to meet all iPhone demand in the future, but the ecosystem needs to be ramped up.

He stressed that increased iPhone production offers India an opportunity to increase its role in global electronics manufacturing networks.

"While it aligns with the 'Make in India' initiative, potentially transforming the country into a global electronics manufacturing hub, it also introduces risks such as over-reliance on a single multinational company and potential geopolitical pressures." *—DW News*

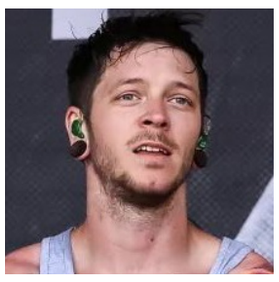


PHOTO: X

'The Devil Wears Prada' singer killed in jet crash

SAN DIEGO, 23 MAY

A private jet carrying a music talent agent and five others hit a power line in foggy weather early Thursday and crashed into a San Diego neighbourhood, slamming into a home and killing multiple people on the flight. The exact death toll was not available. With the home engulfed in flames and jet fuel spreading on to the street, half a dozen vehicles caught fire in the neighbourhood of US Navy-owned housing just before 4am. Dave Shapiro, co-founder of Sound Talent Group, and two employees were among those killed, the music agency said in a statement. Daniel Williams, former drummer for metal band 'The Devil Wears Prada', posted on his Instagram on Wednesday afternoon that he was boarding the plane with Shapiro. The band posted a tribute to Williams on their Instagram page. *—PTI*

17 trapped, toll rises to 4 in China landslides

BEIJING, 23 MAY

Landslides in a rural area in China's southwestern Guizhou province killed at least four people with 17 others still missing in the debris, state media said. Two bodies were found in Changshi township on Thursday, and two others in nearby Qingyang village, where a landslide buried 19 people from eight households, according to state-run Xinhua News Agency. Most of Guowa township, where Qingyang is located, had lost power after the landslides, a local newspaper reported. A resident told state media that it had rained all night. A drone video of the area showed a large swathe of brown earth that cut through the green slope of the hilly terrain. *—PTI*

Panama, Venezuela decides to resume flights after a year

PANAMA CITY, 23 MAY

Panama and Venezuela will resume commercial flights nearly a year after suspending them when they broke off diplomatic relations, Panama's Civil Aviation Authority said on Thursday. Venezuela pulled its diplomatic representation from Panama last July after Panamanian President José Raúl Mulino refused to recognise Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's re-election. The Association of Venezuelan Airlines said that flights would resume "gradually". The Venezuelan government did not immediately comment. Earlier Thursday, Mulino said during his weekly news briefing that he had received a letter from Venezuela, but that he hadn't immediately read it. *—PTI*

Seven Sudanese migrants die in Libyan desert

CAIRO, 23 MAY

At least seven Sudanese migrants were found dead on Friday after their vehicle broke down and left them stranded for days deep in the Libyan desert. The car was carrying 34 Sudanese when it broke down after crossing Libya's border from Chad and entering a deserted path often used by smugglers, said Ebrahim Belhassan, director of the Kufra Ambulance and Emergency Services. They were discovered in the sand dunes after 11 days, having run out of food and water, he said. "The survivors were almost about to die. They were severely dehydrated and exhibiting signs of distress and trauma with such circumstances," he said. . The 22 rescued, including five children, were transferred to Kufra for further medical checkups. *—PTI*

Bangladesh's Yunus mulls resignation

The report comes shortly after the Army said it would conduct elections in December

DHAKA, 23 MAY

Bangladesh's interim government chief Muhammad Yunus is mulling resignation as he is finding it difficult to work in view of political parties failing to reach a common ground, according to a media report.

Student-led National Citizen Party chief Nhid Islam was quoted by BBC Bangla Service that Yunus is apprehensive of the evolving political situation and whether he will be able to carry on with his work.

There have been reports of some discord between the military and the interim government over the possible timeline for holding the parliamentary elections.

Though Islam said Yunus is considering resigning from the post of Chief Advisor, there was no official statement or clarity from his office on the report.

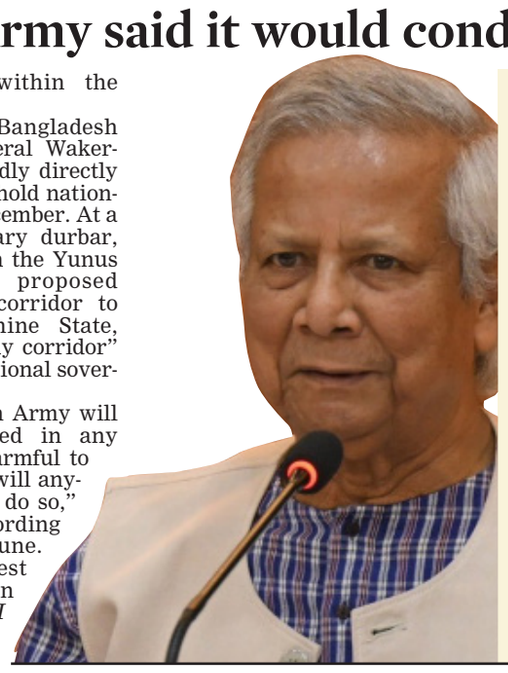
"Sir said, 'If I can't work... I was brought here after a mass uprising to bring change and reform to the country. But in the current situation, with mounting pressure from movements and the way I'm being cornered, this isn't how I can work. The political parties—you've all failed to reach common ground'," Islam told the BBC.

Islam, who was one of the key coordinators of the Students Against Discrimination which led the July uprising last year that forced prime minister Sheikh Hasina's resignation, said he told Yunus "to stay strong for the sake of the country's security".

Yunus's government in the past two days faced several challenges, including intensifying tensions within the interim Cabinet.

Earlier, the Bangladesh Army Chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman reportedly directly warned Yunus to hold national elections by December. At a closed-door military durbar, he also shut down the Yunus government's proposed "humanitarian" corridor to Myanmar's Rakhine State, calling it a "bloody corridor" and a threat to national sovereignty.

"The Bangladesh Army will never be involved in any activity that is harmful to sovereignty. Nor will anyone be allowed to do so," Zaman said, according to Dhaka Tribune. "National interest must come first in any action." *—PTI with agencies*



WHAT IS THE RAKHINE CORRIDOR?

The Rakhine Corridor aimed to deliver aid through Bangladesh's Chattogram Division, where over a million Rohingya refugees have already settled amid ongoing violence in Myanmar. Announced unilaterally in April by Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain, it was backed by the UN and reportedly pushed by the United States. In addition to the Army, the plan sparked criticism from opposition parties, who termed it "unilateral and illegal". Following the Army's intervention, National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman, a close Yunus ally, reversed course and denied any formal agreement. "The UN only asked if Bangladesh could assist in sending humanitarian aid near the border... We said we can consider". *—Agencies*

Iran, US hold fifth round of nuclear negotiations

ROME, 23 MAY

Iran's foreign minister said on Friday that a fifth round of talks with the United States over its nuclear programme has ended in Rome.

Abbas Araghchi made the comment on Telegram, posting a picture of him talking with Oman's Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi, who mediated the discussions.

There was no immediate acknowledgment from the American side. Iran said US Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff left early to catch a flight while others stayed behind for technical talks.

Earlier, Iran and the United States began the fifth round of negotiations over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear programme, with enrichment emerging as the key issue.

US officials up to President Trump insist Iran cannot continue to enrich uranium at all in any deal that could see sanctions lifted on Tehran's struggling economy. *—PTI*

TRUMP ADMIN MOVES FORWARD WITH PLANS TO KILL PENNY

The Trump administration says making cents doesn't make sense anymore. The US Mint has made its final order of penny blanks and plans to stop producing the coin when those run out, a Treasury Department official confirmed on Thursday. This move comes as the cost of making pennies has increased markedly, by upward of 20 per cent in 2024, according to the Treasury. By stopping the penny's production, the Treasury expects an immediate annual savings of USD 56 million in reduced material costs, according to the official. *— PTI*

Turkey to arrest 63 army men over 2016 coup bid

ISTANBUL, 23 MAY

Prosecutors in Turkey issued arrest warrants on 63 active-duty military personnel on Friday over links to a group accused of attempting a coup in 2016. Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office said the suspects included four colonels and came from the army, navy, air force and gendarmerie. Early morning raids across the country resulted in 56 suspects being detained.

They are allegedly tied to an outlawed group that Turkey refers to as the Fethullahist Terror Organisation, or FETO. Its leader, Fethullah Gulen, died in October last year in the United States, where he had lived since 1999 in self-imposed exile.

Some 290 people were killed in July 2016 when rogue military units tried to topple the government. *—PTI*

HOW TRUMP–HARVARD STANDOFF WILL IMPACT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP'S ADMINISTRATION REVOKED HARVARD UNIVERSITY'S ABILITY TO ENROL INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS. HERE'S WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT IT:

Harvard has

72 HOURS

to comply with these 6 conditions to keep its international students

It must give all records of non-immigrant students enrolled in the last 5 years, including audio or video footage. It must also do the following:

1. Report illegal activity.
2. Report dangerous or violent activity.
3. Report threats to other students or university personnel.
4. Report deprivation of rights.
5. Maintain disciplinary records.
6. Maintain audio or video footage of any protest activity on campus.

THE STUDENTS

6,800 international students (27% of total enrolment).

788 Indian students.

Students who completed their degrees this semester will be allowed to graduate. Students who have yet to complete their degree need to transfer to another university, or risk losing US visas.

WHO IS THE HARVARD PRESIDENT STANDING AGAINST TRUMP?

Alan M Garber was born to a Jewish family in 1955 in Rock Island, Illinois. He graduated from Rock Island High School in 1973. He has a 5-decade long connection to Harvard. Here's his history:

- In 1976, graduated summa cum laude with an AB in Economics from Harvard.
- In 1982, earned PhD in Economics from Harvard.
- From 1986 to 2011, served as a faculty member at Stanford University
- Appointed as President in August 2024.
- Following Trump's USD 3 billion funding cut, he took a voluntary 25% salary cut.

Kim plans arrests for failed ship

North Korea's new naval destroyer
PHOTO: MAXAR TECHNOLOGIES

SEOUL, 23 MAY

North Korea is seeking to arrest those responsible for the failed launch of its second naval destroyer, as it denied the warship suffered major damage – a claim quickly met with outside skepticism.

Leader Kim Jong Un expressed fury over an incident that he said was caused by criminal negligence. The main military committee said on Friday that those responsible would be held responsible for an "unpardonable criminal act."

Satellite imagery on the site showed vessel lying on its side and draped in blue covers, with parts of it submerged. North Korea says it'll take about 10 days to repair its damage, but outside observers question that timeframe because damage to the ship appeared much worse than what North Korea claims.

North Korea's state news agency, KCNA, said Friday that the severity of the damage to the 5,000-ton-class destroyer was "not serious" as it cancelled an earlier assessment that the bottom of the hull had been left with holes.

It said the hull on the starboard side was scratched and some seawater had flowed into the stern section. *—PTI*

RESCUE UNDERWAY FOR 260 WORKERS IN SA GOLD MINE

JOHANNESBURG, 23 MAY

Rescue efforts are underway in South Africa to bring 260 workers trapped in a gold mine for a day back to the surface, officials of the Sibanye Stillwater mining company said on Friday.

According to the company officials, an initial investigation showed that a sub-shaft rock winder skip door opened at the loading point and caused some damage to the mineshaft at the Kloof mine, west of Johannesburg. *—PTI*

Israeli strikes kill at least 50 in Gaza

Smoke rises to the sky following an Israeli bombardment in the Gaza Strip as seen from southern Israel on Thursday
PHOTO: PTI

DEIR AL-BALAH, 23 MAY

At least 50 people were killed by Israeli strikes across Gaza overnight on Thursday, as Israel pressed ahead with its military offensive and let in minimal aid to the strip.

At least ten people were killed by strikes in the southern city of Khan Younis, four in the central town of Deir al-Balah and nine in the Jabaliya refugee camp in the north, according to the Nasser, Al-Aqsa and Al-Ahli hospitals where the bodies were brought.

Separately, Gaza's Health Ministry said at least 29 children and elderly people who died recently were registered as "starvation-related deaths", and thousands more are at risk of starving.

Meanwhile, the suspect of the murders of two Israeli Embassy staffers in Washington was charged with murder.

On Thursday night, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu blasted France, the UK and Canada for proposing to establish a Palestinian state.

"Because by issuing their demand, replete with a threat of sanctions against Israel – against Israel, not Hamas – these three leaders effectively said they want Hamas to remain in power," Netanyahu said. *—PTI with agencies*

FAILED DIPLOMACY

Egypt yet to release blogger 8 months after term

LONDON, 23 MAY

Egyptian authorities are yet to release British-Egyptian blogger Alaa Abdel Fattah from prison even though it has been almost eight months since he has completed his sentence, his mother Laila Soueif said on Thursday.

Fattah has been imprisoned in Egypt almost continuously for more than 10 years. He finished his most recent five-year sentence on 29 September, 2024, but has not been released yet, Soueif said.

In protest, both Soueif and Fattah have launched hunger strikes. Soueif has been on hunger strike for the past 230 days and is dangerously weak. Fattah is on hunger strike for the past 80 days.

Soueif started her hunger strike on 29 September, the day Fattah was supposed to be released from prison. She was hospitalised in February and discharged in March on the condition that she would accept 300 calories a day in liquid form, in order to give the UK government time to look into the matter.

However, Soueif returned to a full hunger strike on Tuesday, citing absence of any concrete progress towards Fattah's release. She said, "The Prime Minister made a promise to me and to Parliament to do all that he could to free Alaa."

"But for Alaa sitting in prison, now on hunger strike for 81 days, nothing has changed... We need Alaa released. We need Alaa with us now. We need Alaa reunited with his son Khaled now," the mother said.

On 28 February, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer phoned President Sisi of Egypt to press for Fattah's release but there was no progress after that.

Egypt ranks 170 out of 180 countries and territories in the RSF 2025 World Press Freedom Index due to the frequency of censorship.

—Salar News with agencies

RSF
Alaa Abdel Fattah and his mother Laila Soueif have been on hunger strikes for 80 and 230 days, respectively, demanding his release

PHOTO: REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS

PHOTO: ANI

Gold price rises by ₹100 to ₹98,750/10g

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

Gold prices rose Rs 100 to Rs 98,750 per 10g in the national capital on Friday amid firm global cues, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity appreciated by Rs 100 to Rs 98,300 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes). Firm trends in the international markets and persistent concerns about US fiscal policy continued to support longer-term demand for bullion prices, the association said. However, silver prices plunged by Rs 2,000 to Rs 99,200 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) on Friday. The white metal had closed at Rs 1,01,200 per kg on Thursday. On the global front, spot gold increased by USD 35.46 or 1.08 per cent to USD 3,330.23 per ounce. *—PTI*

Rupee gains 70P to settle at 85.25 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 23 MAY

The rupee snapped its three-day losing streak and settled for the day higher by 70 paise at 85.25 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, on a sharp fall in the dollar index and surge in domestic equities, amid rise in risk appetite for riskier assets. Forex traders said, the rupee which had lost 53 paise in the last three trading sessions, settled with significant gains on Friday largely supported by the weakness of the American currency in the overseas market. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee witnessed heavy volatility. It opened at 85.95 then touched an intra-day high of 85.11 and a low of 86.10 against the US dollar. On Thursday, the rupee depreciated 36 paise to close at 85.95 against the US dollar. *—PTI*

BEML announces 12% profit growth in fourth quarter

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

Mining equipment manufacturer BEML on Friday reported an 11.9 per cent rise in consolidated profit at Rs 287.55 crore for the quarter ended 31 March, 2025. The company had posted a profit of Rs 256.80 crore in the year-ago period, BEML said in a filing to BSE. The income of the company in the January-March period rose to Rs 1,656.36 crore from Rs 1,518.25 crore in the year-ago period, the filing said. The profit of the company for the year ended rose to Rs 292.52 crore over Rs 281.77 crore in the previous fiscal. BEML Limited is a public sector undertaking specialising in the manufacturing of heavy equipment for mining, construction, defense, and rail/metro sectors. *—PTI*

USFDA approves Alembic Pharma's high BP drug

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

Alembic Pharmaceuticals on Friday said it has received final approval from the US health regulator for its generic version of amlodipine and atorvastatin tablets, used to treat high blood pressure. The final approval by the US Food & Drug Administration (USFDA) is for the abbreviated new drug application (ANDA) of Amlodipine and Atorvastatin tablets of strengths 2.5 mg/10 mg, 2.5 mg/20 mg, 2.5 mg/40 mg, 5 mg/10 mg, 5 mg/20 mg, 5 mg/40 mg, 5 mg/80 mg, 10 mg/10 mg, 10 mg/20 mg, 10 mg/40 mg, and 10 mg/80 mg, the company said. These are therapeutically equivalent to reference-listed drug product, Caduet tablets of corresponding strengths of Pharmacia and Upjohn Co LLC, it added. Alembic said it has a cumulative total of 223 ANDA approvals from USFDA. *—PTI*

Ambani, Adani, Vedanta to invest ₹155L cr in Northeast

Rising Northeast Investors Summit 2025 begins in New Delhi

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani, Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani, Founder and Chairman of Vedanta Resources Limited Anil Agarwal with others during the Rising Northeast Investors Summit 2025 in New Delhi on Friday *PHOTO: PTI*

Billionaire Gautam Adani, Oil-to-telecom conglomerate Reliance Industries Ltd and Vedanta Group on Friday committed to investing into Northeast states.

Adani had on Friday committed to investing an additional Rs 50,000 crore over the next 10 years in green energy, road construction and creating digital infrastructure in the North Eastern states as his conglomerate looks to expand its presence in the east.

This investment is on top of Rs 50,000 crore that his group had committed to investing in Assam in February.

Meanwhile, Reliance Chairman Mukesh Ambani on Friday said the company will invest Rs 75,000 crore in North Eastern states in setting up 350 biogas plants, expanding its telecom services, retail footprint, and clean energy projects.

Speaking at the Rising NorthEast Investors Summit here, Ambani and managing director said his group will invest in factories for high-quality FMCG products in the region and setting up a 150-bed cancer hospital in Manipur. Ambani said he is making six commitments to the Chief Ministers of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura.

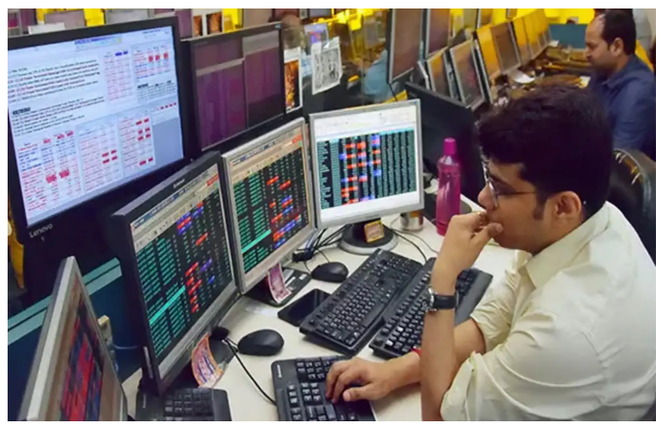
The investments will span green energy, including smart-meters, hydro, pumped storage, power transmission, roads & highways, digital infrastructure, logistics, as well as capacity-building through skilling and vocational training centres.

Additionally, Vedanta Group on Friday said it will invest Rs 30,000 crore in the Northeast in fields of oil and gas, critical minerals, refining facilities, power, optical fibre, system integration, renewable energy, transmission sectors and data centres.

Earlier this year, Vedanta had committed an investment of Rs 50,000 crore in Assam.

The group announced investment across Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Tripura, Meghalaya and Mizoram, at Rising North East Investors Summit here.

The investments will be made in the fields of oil and gas, critical minerals, refining facilities, power, optical fibre, system integration, renewable energy, transmission sectors and data centres in the six Northeastern states, Vedanta said. *—PTI*



After a flat start, the 30-share BSE benchmark bounced back and surged 769.09 points to settle at 81,721.08 *PHOTO: ANI*

Markets rebound 1%, IT shares gain

MUMBAI, 23 MAY

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded sharply by nearly 1 per cent on Friday, propelled by buying in market heavyweights Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank and ITC.

Besides, hopes of a record dividend from the RBI and easing US treasury yields bolstered investor sentiment, traders said.

After a flat start, the 30-share BSE benchmark bounced back and surged 769.09 points or 0.95 per cent to settle at 81,721.08.

During the day, it jumped 953.18 points or 1.17 per cent to 81,905.17.

As many as 2,361 stocks advanced while 1,589 declined and 156 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The NSE Nifty rallied 243.45 points or 0.99 per cent to 24,853.15.

On a weekly basis, the BSE benchmark dropped 609.51 points or 0.74 per cent and the Nifty declined 166.65 points or 0.66 per cent.

From the Sensex firms, Eternal, Power Grid, ITC, Bajaj Finserv, Nestle, Axis Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Adani Ports were among the biggest gainers.

On the other hand, Sun Pharma was the only laggard, declining nearly 2 per cent.

The company's stock fell after it reported a nearly 19 per cent drop in consolidated net profit for the quarter ended March 31, 2025. —PTI

AUM surges to ₹70T, says ICRA

KOLKATA, 23 MAY

The Assets Under Management (AUM) of the Indian mutual fund (MF) industry touched Rs 70 trillion as of March 2025, marking a 22.5 per cent year-on-year growth, according to ICRA Analytics.

In a statement, ICRA Analytics said AUM of open-ended schemes like index funds and exchange-traded funds (ETFs) witnessed a growth of 23.80 per cent in April 2025, followed by open-ended equity funds.

It added that the number of folios grew by 30.21 per cent as of April 2025, while folio count of debt-oriented schemes declined by 1.15 per cent during the period.

The statement said that inflows into equity MFs amounted to Rs 24,269 crore, indicating confidence of investors in the MF industry.

The total number of outstanding systematic investment plans (SIP) grew five per cent year-on-year to 914.41 lakh in April 2025. *—PTI*

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal with US Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick during a meeting on Friday *PHOTO: PTI*

Goyal meets US Commerce Secy to discuss trade pact

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday held his second meeting with US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick in Washington to discuss the proposed bilateral trade agreement currently under negotiation between the two countries.

Earlier Goyal met Lutnick on 20 May, to expedite the talks on the first phase of the trade pact.

"Held a constructive meeting with Secretary @HowardLutnick for a mutually beneficial trade agreement. Committed to enhancing opportunities for our businesses and people," Goyal said in a post on X.

The meeting assumes significance as both the countries are looking at finalising an interim trade pact by 8 July.

The four-day discussions between the chief negotiators have also concluded in Washington on May22.

In the interim trade deal, New Delhi is pushing for full exemption from the 26 per cent reciprocal tariff on Indian goods.

The US on 2 April, imposed an additional 26 per cent reciprocal tariff on Indian goods but suspended it for 90 days till 9 July.

However, the 10 per cent baseline tariff imposed by America remains in place.

Due to the 90-day suspension of the 26 per cent additional import duty, Indian exporters are at present paying just 10 per cent baseline tariffs, instead of 26 per cent earlier proposed.

At present, the Trump administration requires approval from the US Congress to bring tariffs below the MFN (most favoured nation) rates. But the administration has the authority to remove the reciprocal tariffs imposed on a number of countries, including India. *—PTI*

OLA ELECTRIC STARTS DELIVERIES OF ROADSTER X

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

Ola Electric on Friday said it has commenced deliveries of its Roadster X portfolio of motorcycles, along with offers worth Rs 10,000 for the first 5,000 customers.

The prices of the Roadster X series start at Rs 99,999 for the 2.5kWh variant, Rs 1,09,999 for the 3.5kWh variant, and Rs 1,24,999 for the 4.5kWh model, the company said in a statement. Roadster X+ 4.5kWh is priced at Rs 1,29,999, while the Roadster X+ 9.1kWh (with 4680 Bharat Cell) that has a range of 501 km/charge, is priced at Rs 1,99,999, it added.

"The Roadster X is a bold leap, marking our entry into the motorcycling segment. The Roadster X is designed, engineered, and built in India, for a generation that wants to ride the bike of the future," Ola Electric Chairman and MD, Bhavish Aggarwal, said.

With deliveries starting today, the Roadster X would unlock the true potential of EVs in the two-wheeler category, accelerating EV adoption and penetration, he added.

The Rs 10,000 offer includes extended warranty, MoveOS+ and essential care free as part of its 'Ride the Future' campaign. *—PTI*

The prices of the Roadster X series start at Rs 99,999 *PHOTO: X*

6-MEMBER BOARD TO REGULATE PAYMENT SYSTEMS

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

RBI governor headed a six-member Payments Regulatory Board, including three central government nominees, will regulate and supervise payment systems in the country, according to a central bank notification.

The Payments Regulatory Board (PRB) will replace the Board for Regulation and Supervision of Payment and Settlement System (BPSS). The five-member BPSS is also headed by the RBI Governor but does not include any government nominee.

According to the notification, other members will be the Deputy Governor in charge of the Payment and Settlement Systems, one officer of the RBI to be nominated by the Central Board, and three persons nominated by the central government. RBI Governor, Deputy Governor and the central bank official will function as "ex officio" members of the Board. *—PTI*

Kanodia Cement files draft IPO papers with Sebi

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

Cement manufacturing company Kanodia Cement has filed preliminary papers with the markets regulator Sebi, seeking its approval to float an Initial Public Offering (IPO).

The IPO is entirely an Offer For Sale (OFS) of 1.49 crore shares by promoters and an individual shareholder, with no fresh issue component, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) filed on Thursday.

Since the public issue is completely an OFS, the company will not receive any funds from the issue and entire proceeds will go to selling shareholders.

Kanodia Cement is a cement manufacturing company operating through Satellite Grinding Units (SGUs) in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, specialising in the production of blended cement such as Portland Pozzolana Cement and Composite Cement.

It operates through a unique combination of business-to-business contract manufacturing for cement brands (Contract Manufacturing Model); and production and marketing of its own consumer brands (Business-to-Consumer Model).

As on 31 December, 2024, the company operates five satellite grinding units with an aggregate cement manufacturing capacity of 3.54 MTPA. The company's installed grinding capacity grew at a CAGR of 22.12 per cent. *—PTI*

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH UAE

Open AI to build world's largest data centre

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

Chat GPT's parent company Open AI on Thursday announced a partnership with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for first ever international deployment of Stargate, OpenAI's AI infrastructure platform in Abu Dhabi, UAE. This will be world's largest AI data centre.

This partnership includes one-gigawatt AI computing cluster in Abu Dhabi with 200MW expected to go operational in 2026.

According to Open AI, the Stargate Project "is a new company which intends to invest USD 500 billion over the next four years building new AI infrastructure for OpenAI in the United States."

Additionally, Stargate is a reflection of long-term vision which aims to build "frontier-scale compute capacity around the world in service of safe, secure, and broadly beneficial AGI."

The project is partnered by G42, Oracle, NVIDIA, Cisco, and SoftBank and comes in line with the "United Arab Emirates' commitment earlier this year to invest USD 1.4 trillion in the U.S., which will support job creation, drive economic growth, and help America maintain its technological leadership."

Stargate UAE has the ability to provide AI infrastructure and compute capacity within a 3218.688kms radius, reaching up to half the world's population. This deal come as a byproduct of US President Donald Trump's Middle East tour last week, where a slew of new AI deals, including the UAE Stargate project slated for Abu Dhabi. *—ANI*

REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

STARGATE GOES INTERNATIONAL

Chat GPT's parent company Open AI has partnered with the United Arab Emirates to launch its first ever international deployment of AI infrastructure platform 'Stargate'

Investment of **USD 500 billion**

- To secure American leadership in AI
- Support job creation
- To unlock the full potential of AI

Location: **Abu Dhabi**

- Drive economic growth
- It will have 1 giga watt computing cluster with 200 million watt operational in 2026

PHOTO: PTI

Srinath named match referee for WTC final

DUBAI, 23 MAY

The Indian team may not have reached the World Test Championship final, but former pacer Javagal Srinath will ensure the country's presence in the upcoming marquee clash by serving as its match referee with WTC debutant Nitin Menon doing duty as the fourth umpire. England's Richard Illingworth and Chris Gaffaney of New Zealand will be the on-field umpires in the WTC final at Lord's. Defending champions Australia will take on first-time finalists South Africa for the mace from 11-15 June at the hallowed venue. Richard Kettleborough, also from England, who has officiated in the finals of several marquee ICC events, including the Men's World Cup and the Champions Trophy, has been appointed as the TV umpire.—*PTI*

Indian Open surfing from 30 May in M'luru

MANGALORE, 23 MAY

The Indian Open of surfing, which is the second stop in the National Surfing Championship series, is set to return for its sixth edition from May 30 to 1 June. The competition will be hosted by the Mantra Surf Club against the backdrop of Sasihithlu Beach and will be organised by the Surfing Swami Foundation, the Surfing Federation of India (SFI) stated. The three-day competition will witness participation from India's top-ranked surfers in four categories: men's open, women's open, U-16 Boys, and U-16 Girls.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Mairaj Ahmad, top second shotgun national trials

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

Olympian Mairaj Ahmad Khan and Ganemat Sekhon finished on top in the men's and women's skeet finals respectively of the second shotgun national trials at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range on Friday. Mairaj shot 55 in the men's final, edging out Paris Olympian Anantjeet Singh Naruka, who scored 54, by a single shot. Ganemat also secured victory by a one-shot margin, finishing with 53 ahead of Maheshwari Chauhan's 52 in the women's event. Angad Vir Singh Bajwa and Parinaaz Dhaliwal finished third in the men's and women's categories.—*PTI*

Ivan called up by England for first time since Saudi move

DUBAI, 23 MAY

BIvan Toney has received his first call-up by England since moving to play his club soccer in Saudi Arabia. The 29-year-old striker was in England's squad at last year's European Championship and secured a move to Al-Ahli in the Saudi Pro League a few weeks later. Toney has scored 22 league goals and helped Al-Ahli win the Asian Champions League this month. He was one of three out-and-out strikers named Friday in Thomas Tuchel's 26-man squad for a World Cup qualifier against Andorra in Barcelona on 7 June and a friendly against Senegal at the City Ground three days later. "Ivan deserves to be with us," Tuchel said at a news conference.—*PTI*

PBKS eyeing first top-two finish in 11 years vs DC

Punjab is riding a wave of success after a decade of pain

JAIPUR, 23 MAY

Riding a wave of success after a decade of pain, a full-strength Punjab Kings will fancy their chances of securing their first top-two finish in 11 years, when they face Delhi Capitals in the Indian Premier League here on Saturday.

Apart from the 2014 season when they topped the league table and finished runners-up, PBKS have only made one other playoff appearance in a competition that has existed for the past 18 years.

Having ended an 11-year drought, PBKS is now relishing the prospect of not just finishing in the top two but also entering the summit clash and then making a dash for a maiden title.

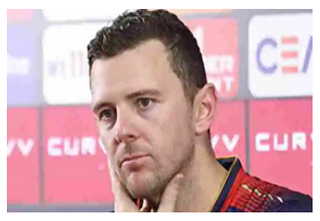
Punjab Kings players celebrate after the match PHOTO: PTI

A squad that is already brimming with confidence was shored up further when their overseas quartet of Marcus Stoinis, Josh Inglis, Aaron Hardie, and Kyle Jamieson joined their extremely talented Indian teammates in the Pink City three days ago. All four will be available for selection as PBKS look to book a top-two finish

> There were times when we had our chances to make the playoffs
>
>
>
> -Rishabh Pant, Lucknow Super Giants skipper

RCB's Hazlewood likely to return ahead of playoffs

Australia pacer Josh Hazlewood is likely to rejoin Royal Challengers Bengaluru ahead of the IPL playoffs, having recovered from a shoulder niggle. The fast bowler last featured in the ongoing IPL season on 27 April and has since missed two games. He had left for home during the one-week break in the league caused by the India-Pakistan military conflict. Since then,



the 34-year-old has been training in Brisbane as part of Australia's preparations ahead of the World Test Championship (WTC) final. —*PTI*

PBKS VS DC

HEAD TO HEAD	
PLAYED:	34
PBKS Won:	17
DC Won:	16
NO RESULT	1

PBKS vs DC Match starts at 7.30 pm IST

Currently focusing on IPL: Sai Sudharsan

AHMEDABAD, 23 MAY

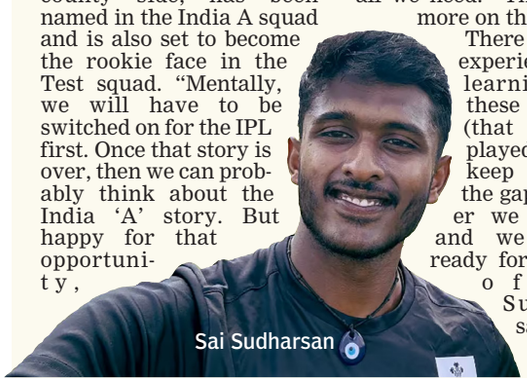
Gujarat Titans opener Sai Sudharsan is thrilled about his selection for the upcoming India A tour of England, but for now, his sights are firmly set on guiding the former champions to Qualifier 1 and the final of IPL 2025.

The 23-year-old, who has the experience of representing Surrey and scoring a century for the English county side, has been named in the India A squad and is also set to become the rookie face in the Test squad. "Mentally, we will have to be switched on for the IPL first. Once that story is over, then we can probably think about the India 'A' story. But happy for that opportunity, and I think I would have a great time there," Sudharsan told reporters on Thursday.

The Tamil Nadu opener, currently leading the Orange Cap race with 638 runs in 13 matches, has been one of the standout performers of the season.

"Right now, the most important thing is to finish in the top two so that we get an extra opportunity (of playing in Qualifier 2), if at all we need. "The focus is more on that.

There are a lot of experiences and learnings in these 13 games (that we have played). So, we keep on filling the gaps wherever we feel like, and we will be ready for the playoffs." Sudharsan said. —*PTI*



Sai Sudharsan

OPPORTUNITY FOR OTHERS

Gambhir: It'll be tough without Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli

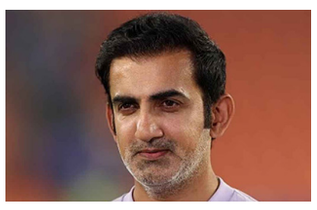
NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

India head coach Gautam Gambhir has admitted that dealing with the absence of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma will be a significant challenge for the team, but their Test retirement has also opened the door for others to step up and take responsibility.

Kohli and Rohit bid farewell to Test cricket within a week of each other earlier this month.

The announcements came ahead of the marquee five-match series in England next month, the squad for which will be announced on Saturday in Mumbai.

"I think, when you start the game and when you want to finish, it's a very individual decision. No one has the right. Be it the coach, the selector, be it anyone in this country has any right to tell someone when to retire and when not to retire. So it comes from within," Gautam Gambhir told CNN-News18.



With their exit, India will not only need a new Test captain but will also be without two of their most seasoned players, a leadership and experience void, Gambhir admits, won't be easy to fill.

"And yes, we've got to be without two senior players to experience players. And sometimes I believe that it's the opportunity for some other people to put their hand up and say, 'Okay, I am ready for it'." —*PTI*

Gill front-runner for new Test captain

India's cricket selectors will set the ball rolling for the team's long transition journey in the longest format when they pick a new Test captain and finalise the squad for what is expected to be a challenging five-match series in England, here on Saturday. The 25-year-old Shubman Gill is a clear favourite to land the high-profile job

Modest start for Saptak Talwar in Denmark

BOGENSE, 23 MAY

Indian golfer Saptak Talwar continued his journey on the Hotel Planner Tour with a modest first round of 1-over 73 that saw him flirting with the cutline at the Danish Golf Challenge here.

Talwar, who achieved his breakthrough win this season back home in India, had three birdies against two bogeys and one double bogey.

Scotsman Calum Fyfe fired an impressive eight under par 64 to secure a two-shot lead on a weather-affected opening day.

Shubhankar, Veer have off to a difficult start in Belgium

Indian golfers Shubhankar Sharma and Veer Ahlawat endured a tough opening day to return identical cards of three-over 74 and be placed a lowly tied 132nd in the Soudal Open here.

Both of them will have to cover a lot of ground to make the weekend cut.

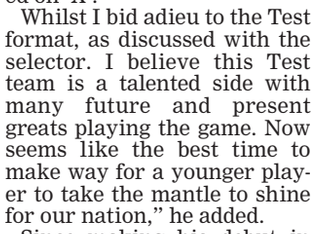
Sharma had four birdies, five bogeys, and one double bogey in his unimpressive day, while Ahlawat dropped five strokes, including a triple-bogey, and managed a couple of birdies on each side of the course on Thursday.

Diksha, Avani and Hitaashee tied 36th at Jabra Ladies

Indian golfers Diksha Dagar, Avani Prashanth, and Hitaashee Bakshi finished their first round at the Jabra Ladies Open with identical one-over-par 72 each here.

All three were tied 36th in the standings.

The fourth Indian, Tvesa Malik, had a disappointing start with 4-over-75, and she was tied 84th. —*PTI*



ANGELO MATHEWS TO RETIRE FROM TESTS NEXT MONTH

COLOMBO, 23 MAY

Veteran Sri Lankan all-rounder Angelo Mathews on Friday announced that the first Test against Bangladesh next month will be his last five-day game as he makes way for younger talent in the traditional format with a "grateful heart and unforgettable memories."

The 37-year-old will, however, continue to play white-ball cricket for his country. His final Test appearance will be in Galle from June 17 to 21.

"With a grateful heart and unforgettable memories. It is time for me to say goodbye to the most cherished format of the game, International Test Cricket!... The first Test match against Bangladesh in June will be my last red-ball appearance for my country," he posted on 'X'.

Whilst I bid adieu to the Test format, as discussed with the selector. I believe this Test team is a talented side with many future and present greats playing the game. Now seems like the best time to make way for a younger player to take the mantle to shine for our nation," he added.

Since making his debut in 2009, Mathews has turned up in 118 Tests, scoring 8167 runs -- the third-highest tally in Sri Lanka's history, behind Kumar Sangakkara (12,400) and Mahela Jayawardene (11,814).

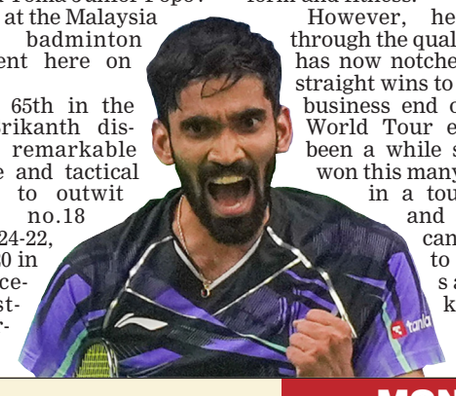
He has a fairly good average of 44.62 and has so far smashed 16 hundreds and 45 centuries, with a 200 not out being the best of his lengthy career. He also has 34 wickets to his credit. —*PTI*

Srikanth keeps India's flag flying, enters semifinal

KUALA LUMPUR, 23 MAY

Seasoned Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth stormed into his first semifinal in over a year with a hard-fought three-game win over higher-ranked Toma Junior Popov of France at the Malaysia Masters badminton tournament here on Friday.

Ranked 65th in the world, Srikanth displayed remarkable resilience and tactical maturity to outwit world no.18 Popov 24-22, 17-21, 22-20 in a fiercely-contested quarterfinal that lasted one hour and 14 minutes.



The 32-year-old from Guntur, a 2021 World Championships silver medallist, has endured a rough patch over the past few seasons, struggling with form and fitness.

However, he battled through the qualifiers and has now notched up five straight wins to reach the business end of a BWF World Tour event."It's been a while since I've won this many matches in a tournament, and I hope I can continue to do so," said Srikanth. —*PTI*

DJOKOVIC WILL FACE HUBERT HURKACZ IN FINAL

GENEVA, 23 MAY

Pole Hubert Hurkacz, the No. 6 seed, won against Austrian qualifier Sebastian Ofner 6-3, 6-4 to reach the final of the Geneva Open at Tennis Club de Genève, Parc des Eaux-Vives on Friday afternoon. Hurkacz, ranked No. 31, will play the winner of the match between qualifier Cameron Norrie and Serb Novak Djokovic, the second seed, next. Ahead of his victory, the Pole beat French wildcard Arthur Cazaux (6-3, 6-4), Frenchman Arthur Rinderknech (6-4, 6-1), and American Taylor Fritz, the top seed (6-3, 7-6 (5)).

Novak Djokovic beat Cameron Norrie 4-6, 7-6 (8-6), 1-6 during a titanic battle on Friday afternoon to reach the final of the Geneva Open.

Hubert Hurkacz and Novak Djokovic in Geneva Open PHOTO: X

Novak Djokovic will face Hubert Hurkacz in the final of the 2025 Gonet Geneva Open. It's a timely victory for Djokovic, who hasn't won a tournament of any kind since taking gold at the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.A return to Roland-Garros is next on the cards for both players, but the duo were looking to complete their French Open preparations on a high with victory in Switzerland. Djokovic, who sat out the recent Italian Open, didn't have it all his way, though, with Norrie able to hold his serve until the seventh game of the first set. —*PTI*

MONACO GRAND PRIX

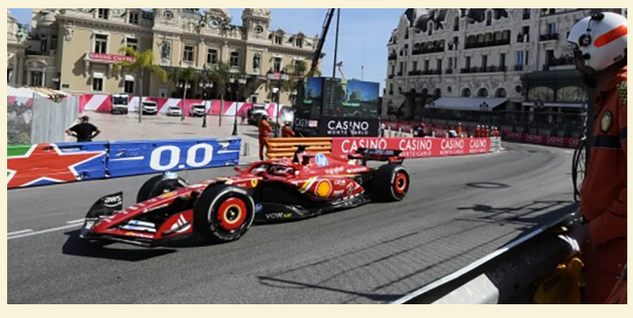
F1 hopes extra pit stops bring more excitement

MONACO, 23 MAY

The Monaco Grand Prix may be "the jewel in Formula 1's crown" but the race itself is rarely must-see TV. Sometimes, it's downright dull.

F1 and its governing body, the FIA, hope a rule change for Sunday's race will change that. Drivers will be forced to change tires at least twice in the hope that a more pit stop strategy could shake up an event where Saturday qualifying and the resulting grid position are often more important than race day.

"I guess it can go both ways," champion Max Verstappen said Thursday.



F1 hopes extra pit stops bring more excitement to the glamorous but dull Monaco Grand Prix PHOTO: X / @F1

"It can be quite straightforward, or it can go completely crazy because of safety cars coming into play or not making the right calls. I think it will spice it up, probably a bit more."

The change is designed to stop a repeat of last year, when a first-lap crash brought out the red flag, allowing everyone to make their one mandatory tire change.

With overtaking all but impossible on the twisty Monaco streets, the rest of the race was a procession. Home driver Charles Leclerc took the win for Ferrari, and all of the top 10 finished in grid order.

How Sunday's race shakes out could depend on whether teams get creative with their strategies. "Normally, with one stop, once you have a good pit stop and everything is fine, then you drive to the end and just stay focused and not hit the barrier," Verstappen said. —*PTI*

Inaugural Hockey to begin on 18 June in Chennai

NEW DELHI, 23 MAY

The first-ever Hockey India Masters Cup 2025, a tournament for veteran players, will be held in Chennai from 18 to 27 June.

Hockey India (HI) on Friday officially announced the venue and dates of the event that will see both men and women players in action.

The league marks a new chapter in Indian hockey, offering a dedicated platform for veteran players.

According to the rules of the league, a player must be aged 40 and above to compete in the men's category, and 35 and above in the women's division.

The names of the teams for both the categories will be released shortly, and to participate in the event, players must register through their respective state member units, HI said in a statement.

The competition will follow a league-cum-knockout format with a pool structure based on the final number of participating teams.

Former Indian women's hockey team captain Asunta Lakra expressed her excitement about the tournament. —*PTI*